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PlayStation MAGAZINE

Issue 8 August 98

COLIN McRAE RALLY
Best Ride Ever?

Chill out with
Mr Freeze in
Batman & Robin

ASSAULT
Top 3D Blasting Action

REVIEWED
COLIN McRAE RALLY
BATMAN & ROBIN
N_2O
WARGAMES
ROAD RASH 3D
BUG RIDERS
KICK OFF WORLD
MEN IN BLACK
CRIME KILLER
ATARI GREATEST HITS 2
BLASTO
TOMBI
FLUID
BLAST RADIUS

PLATINUM
V-RALLY

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Editorial

Out with the old, in with the new. This month we say "goodbye" to Darren, Saul, Chris and Graham and extend a very warm welcome to our new team. We think the outgoing fab four did an excellent job at EPM, but they've got their work cut out for them now they've left - good luck guys, you'll need it. In their place comes Alan King, Doug Williams and Mike Cook. Check out their work and I'm sure you'll agree they're great writers and know their games inside out.

Hope you like our ace Power Tips cheat cards, free with this very issue. They're designed to fit snugly inside your game box, along with the CD, manual and the porno picture you found in the woods and are hiding from your mum. Now, instead of searching through your old magazines every time you want a cheat for Tomb Raider 2 or V-Rally, you have everything you need at hand. It doesn't stop there, either - from time to time we'll be publishing more Power Tips cards, building your collection into a formidable cheats library. If you haven't got the game, keep the card safe - you never know, you might buy it one day.

Take a good hard look at our Victory Boxing 2 preview on Page 26 too. Vicki Lee - she's got a body to kill for, hasn't she? Perhaps these are more pictures you should hide from your mum. Come to think of it, hide them from your dad too or you'll never get your magazine back.

For my money, this issue's best games are Colin McRae Rally, WarGames and Blast Radius - every one of them scoring over 90%. With games this good, the future for the PSX looks very rosy indeed. Surely the games can't get any better than this - can they?

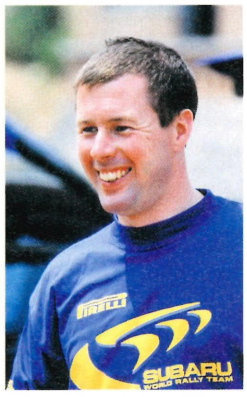
Ian

Highlights

Braben Bites Back

We check out Frontier Developments' top strategy blaster V2000 and meet the man who made it all possible - games legend David Braben. He's been in the industry since before many of us were born, and his experience and expertise shine through in his latest effort, an update of his decade-old hit Virus...





Colin McRae Rally

This is the first true rally sim ever to hit the PlayStation. V-Rally was more arcadey in its approach (nothing wrong with that), and Tommi Mäkinen was just plain crap (everything wrong with that). Colin McRae is the first game we've seen that's constructed like a rally, with set stages and no other cars on the track. It's a damned fine racer too...Ò



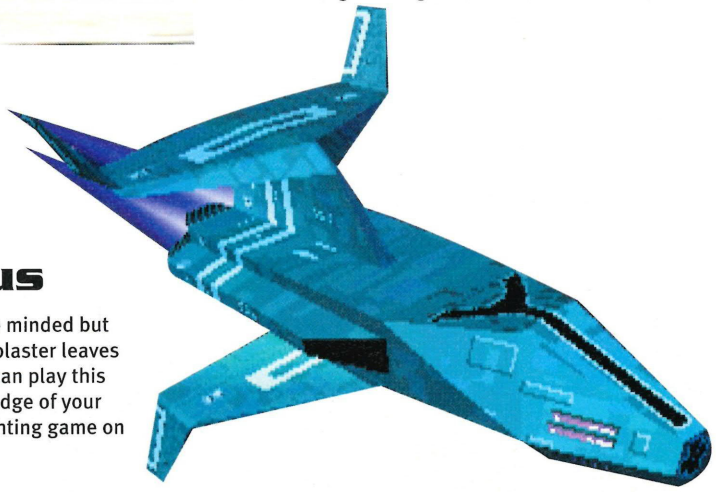
WarGames

Don't you just hate it when they put capital letters in the middle of game names? Thankfully, dodgy typography is WarGames' only failing. The game is one of the best we've seen in years - challenging in one-player mode, unstoppable when battling a buddy.



Road Rash 3D

Pull back the throttle, crouch low over the handlebars and watch out for the rider behind you - he's got an electric cattle prod! Road Rash 3D is a stunning update of the 16-bit rave, complete with some blockbuster rock background tracks - by bands you've never heard of, but who cares? They, like the game, deliver the goods big-time.



Blast radius

Focused but not limited, single minded but not simplistic, this space-age blaster leaves the rest with laser burns. You can play this for a week and still be on the edge of your seat. Probably the best dogfighting game on the PSX...

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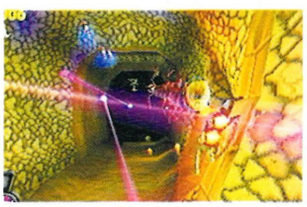
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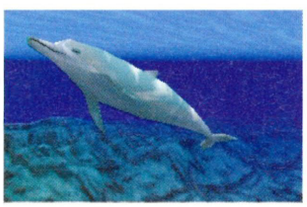
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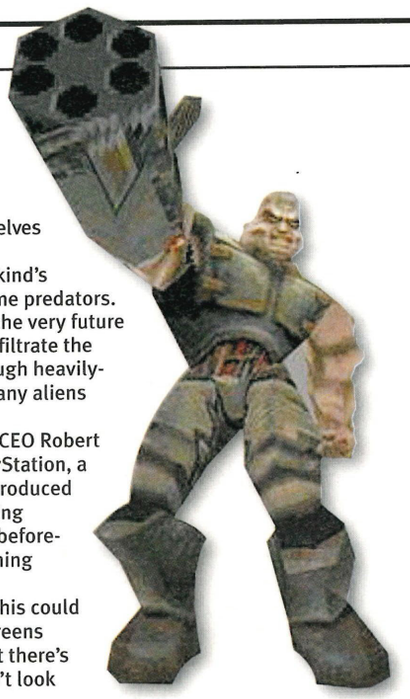
TACTICS OGRE 80
Final Fantasy Tactics using Ogre Battle characters.



signals

STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

QUAKE II COMING 2 U!



The PC hit Quake II is coming to the PlayStation. The game, id's Sci-Fi sequel to Doom, will be released by Activision and features increased interactivity and better enemy AI, with the monsters manoeuvring themselves into strategic positions before firing.



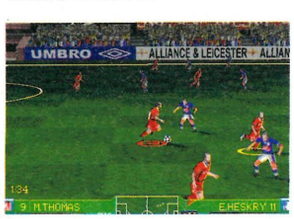
Quake II sees the player taking on mankind's greatest enemy, an alien race of fearsome predators. As the Earth launches its final assault, the very future of humanity is at stake. Players must infiltrate the enemy planet and battle their way through heavily-fortified military installations. Many, many aliens stand in your way - can you make it?

According to Activision's Chairman and CEO Robert Kotick, "In bringing Quake II to the PlayStation, a whole new section of gamers will be introduced to the phenomenon. The game's pounding action, multiplayer mayhem and never-before-seen levels provide a powerful new gaming experience".

No firm release date has been set, but this could really be one to look forward to. The screens shown here are from the PC version, but there's no reason to believe the PSX game won't look just as good.

WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER-UPDATE

Eidos are to update their top soccer game, World League Soccer 98. The new version, World League Soccer 99, will feature hi-res graphics and a host of new features which the company are, at present, keeping under wraps. Teams featured has also to be arranged. World League Soccer 98, pictured here, scored an incredible 94% when reviewed in Issue Six. Expect some early screenshots of the forthcoming release next ish.



SCORPION LIGHTGUN: EVEN MORE STING



Remember Blaze's Scorpion lightgun, which scored 9/10 in Issue Six's lightgun feature? Well they've made it even better by including an improved chip and a better lens.

Previously, the hardware chip used in the Scorpion included a 'program loop' which, when the gun was fired, interpreted the data and placed the shot. Unfortunately this introduced a slight delay - when you fired the gun, the program had to complete its loop before the shot could be registered on the screen. This delay was literally fractions of a second, but it introduced an element of inaccuracy.

Blaze have stripped down the Scorpion and replaced the chip in question with the latest interrupt technology. Now the program, which still follows a loop of instructions, can register a shot immediately, improving the degree of accuracy achieved by the gun. The lens has been refined too. In light of the gun's improved performance, we'll review it again next ish and let you know just how much better it is.

TOCA 2 ON THE STARTING GRID

Warwickshire-based developers Codemasters are set to follow up their best-selling motor racing sim TOCA: Touring Car Championship with a sequel, TOCA 2, pencilled in for release in the Winter of 1998. The new game will feature the new 1998 rosters as well as double the power of the original and far more features, including the introduction of strategic pit-stops.





The graphics in the first TOCA game were good, but the sequel promises to be even better. There will also be twice as many circuits, offering a lasting challenge even to seasoned TOCA players. The game is developed by the team that produced the original TOCA, but strengthened by members of the Colin McRae Rally team.

"Last year TOCA was phenomenal", said Mike Hayes, Codemasters' Marketing Director. "TOCA 2 is more than an annual update, and will deliver twice what the people are expecting". The artwork we already have (shown here) looks very impressive - expect to see in-game shots as soon as we get 'em.



TRIUMPH AND AGONY

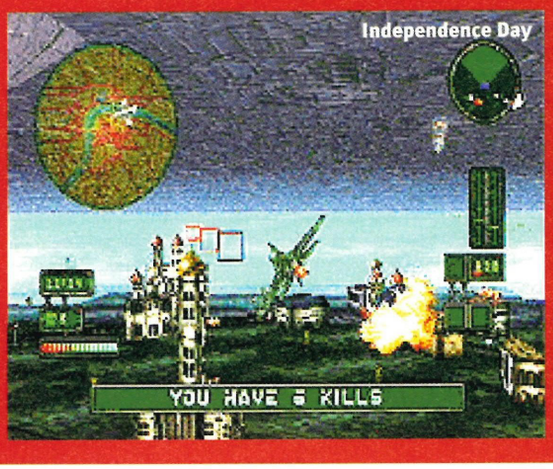
Comparing great games and total turkeys...

This month and every month, we offer two outwardly similar games, but with a huge difference - quality. One title oozes playability, the other just oozes.

On paper, Independence Day and Firestorm: Thunderhawk 2 are similar games - flight sims lite, or, more accurately, shoot-'em-ups with a flight simmy feel. That's where the comparison ends. Independence Day (or ID4 to its friends) is a dreadful game which sucks like an industrial-strength vacuum cleaner. Almost everything about it is wrong - the levels are samey, the controls awful and it has less atmosphere than a Tupperware party in Essex. Hit the ground with your plane and you bounce like a rubber ball, losing energy. How can you take a game seriously after that?

Compare this with Firestorm, a game from the dawn of the PSX. Here the missions are structured, so the learning curve isn't a simplistic matter of throwing in more baddies with bigger guns. Although not as varied as latter-day PSX games, Firestorm enjoys weapons and tactics which actually make a difference to the game. Neither title boasts cool visuals, but this is inevitable considering how old they are. At least Firestorm isn't cursed by ID4's pathetic pop-up. Its overall presentation is superior too. The developers obviously took a pride in their work, something not evident in the workmanlike Independence Day.

In a nutshell, Firestorm: Thunderhawk 2 is fun. Independence Day is boring. 'Nuff said.





TOYS FOR THE BOYS

Win free tickets to London exhibition

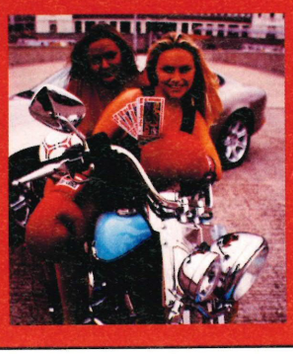
The first ever Toys for the Boys exhibition hits the Wembley Exhibition Centre from 4-6th September 1998. The show will feature all manner of gadgets, gizmos and oddities - according to the organisers, 'everything the young lad could dream of'.

Sony and Nintendo will be showing off their wares, as will Armani, Valentino, Joop, Wilson and Yamaha. Visitors can try their hand at everything from passing a motorcycle test to landing a 747 in a snowstorm (we presume they mean on a simulator!), from driving a golf ball down 'the mother of all driving ranges' to driving on a mini NASCAR circuit.

Among the prizes waiting to be snapped up at the event are a set of Wilson golf clubs and a Yamaha motorbike.

Alan Gibbs of organisers Crucial Events said, "There have been events aimed at Brit Bloke before, but none have cast the net as far and wide as Toys for the Boys 98. It's going to be the ultimate lad's day out".

Tickets for Toys for the Boys cost £7 - ring the special hotline on 0181 795 95 69 for details, though we've got 50 to give away. To stand a chance of winning one, slap your name and address on the back of a postcard and send it to: Toys for the Boys/extreme PlayStation Ticket Offer, Alexander House, 38 Forehill, Ely, Cambs CB7 4NJ. The closing date is 17th August, 1998, so hurry!

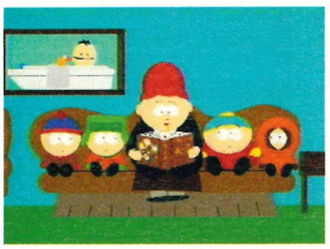


signals

OH MY GOD, THEY'VE KILLED KENNY



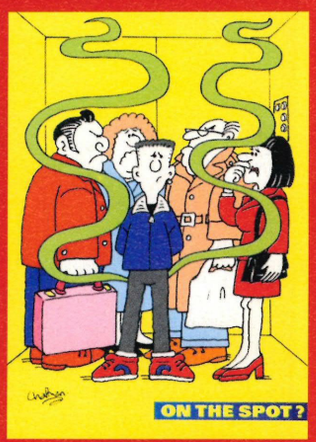
South Park, the popular adult cartoon, is coming to the PSX courtesy of Acclaim. The game, due for release next February, will feature all the main characters from the programme including the unfortunate Kenny, who gets killed in every single episode.
We've no details or screens from the PlayStation game - according to Acclaim, its style and genre have yet to be decided, but the graphics are likely to resemble the cartoon images shown here. Also, because South Park features swearing, violence and general adult silliness, rumour has it the game is likely to be 18-rated.







POST TASTE



Each month we pick the best and worst postcards from the losing competition entries and reward them with any old crap we've got lying around in the office -honest! This month's best postcard came from Janet Divine of Cardiff who sent this nasty niff Oxy ad - 'whatever else puts you on the spot, it needn't be spots'. Tenuous link, but the picture reminds us of our Managing Editor.
This month's worst offering was sent in by Ian Farmery of Mexborough, South Yorkshire. We love old historical buildings here at EPM, but this postcard makes St Margaret's Chapel in Edinburgh Castle look about as interesting as a supermarket checkout counter. Ho hum!



Janet, our worthy Post Taste 'best card' winner, receives a novel sent to us as a print sample, while Ian gets some postcards, a sticker and a badge. Remember, when you enter one of our compos, think about your postcard - you too might win a terrifyingly bad prize!

AND THE WHEELS KEEP TURNING...



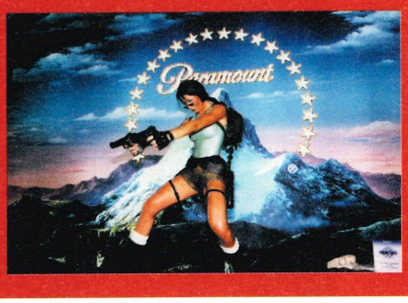
Joytech, the most successful peripherals manufacturer currently on the market, have teamed up with the Jordan Formula 1 racing team to produce what could well be the best steering wheel yet to hit the PSX. The Official Jordan Grand Prix Racing Wheel features Formula 1-style gear shifters, located on the wheel itself, as well as a more traditional rally-style gearstick. The wheel, which supports analogue and digital technology, is ergonomically designed around the genuine Jordan wheel used in their F1 race cars. It also comes supplied with quality foot pedals. According to Joytech director Matthew Lamprell, "The importance of value for money, coupled with high standards of quality control, have always been paramount in the development of our wide product range. Such principles are invaluable to us as we strive to be first on the market with exciting and innovative new products". What could be more innovative than an officially-licensed wheel developed alongside a top Formula 1 team, who were involved at every stage of the wheel's development?
We've tested the wheel at its official launch party, and it looks set to be something special which will take the PSX driving scene by storm. Look forward to a full review next issue.

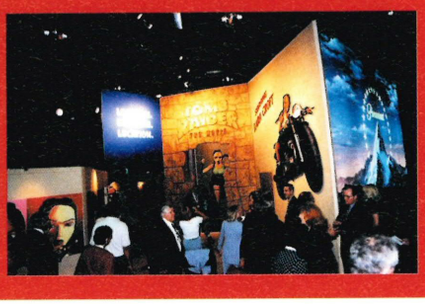
EXCALIBUR 2555AD - AN APOLOGY

Last issue we reviewed Telstar's Excalibur 2555AD as a forthcoming Platinum release, giving it a respectable 78%. Trouble is, the game isn't being released on the Platinum label in the foreseeable future. Due to a production cock-up, the game was listed in a forthcoming releases schedule in error, and we reviewed it without realising it was a mistake. Sorry. Still, your local second-hand software dealer will probably have a copy of the game for under £20, so if our review whetted your appetite, check them out.

LARA LOOK-ALIKES

Another month, another mag, another Lara lookalike. We've still no news on who's playing Ms Croft in Paramount Pictures' forthcoming film, due late next year. The script's not yet finished, and casting won't start until the storyline's finalised.
Lara does have a new human face, however. Nell McAndrew, signed up to make personal appearances as Lara Croft, is shown here at the E3 trade show in Atlanta, Georgia. Gorgeous, isn't she?



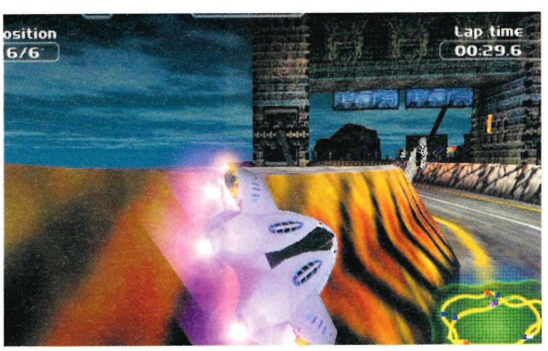


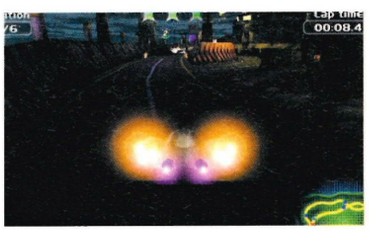


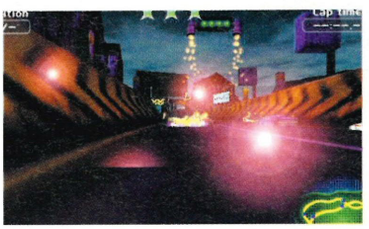
NEW PUBLISHER HITS THE PSX

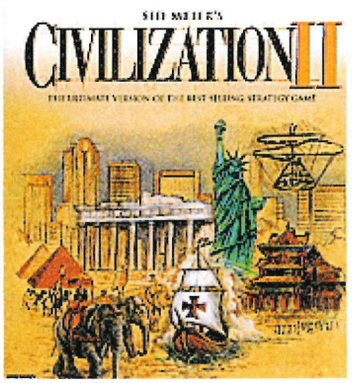


Newly-formed software company Pin-Ball Games are set to release their first title on the PlayStation within the next few months. The Brownhills-based company, formed in August 1997 as a sister company to development team NMS, are to release a WipEout-style driver called Outrage in the near future. NMS, famous for developing Hasbro's Battleships and Sega's Mass Destruction, have spent the last 14 months developing a game engine which cam move around 6,000 polygons a frame, a spectacular rate considering the norm is more like 3,000. According to NMS, Outrage also boasts real physics, no fogging or pop-up and fully interactive environments. Vehicle damage is also catered for.
'We are committed to the PlayStation', says Pin-Ball Games' Raz Mirza, 'and will continue to develop for it along with other formats'.
At the time of writing Outrage is almost finished, so expect a full review next issue.





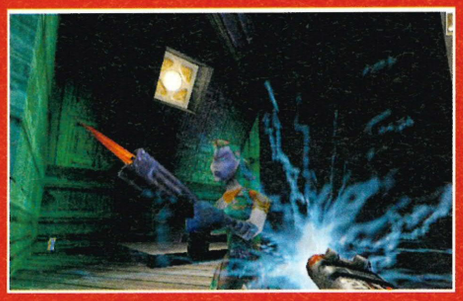




MICROPROSE & ACTIVISION REACH CIVILIZED SETTLEMENT

The legal dispute between MicroProse, Activision and board game manufacturers Avalon Hill over the rights to the Civilization name has been settled out of court, leaving Activision free to convert the highly-acclaimed Civilization II for the PlayStation, and also convert their forthcoming Civilization add-on, Civilization: Call to Power.
"we are very pleased to have worked out a mutually beneficial settlement", said Activision Chairman Robert Kotick. "Civilization is an important gaming franchise".
Civilization and its sequels have sold over two million copies world-wide, making it one of the most successful strategy games ever. Civilization II was rated as Game of the Year by Time magazine, and if the PSX version is as good, it could well be a worthy winner.

CLASSIC MOMENTS IN VIDEOGAME VIOLENCE



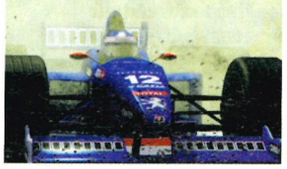


Tell yourself it isn't real...
There's something nasty on the PC - Unreal, GT Interactive's latest Doom clone. Its graphics and frame rate are, well - unreal, and it doesn't disappoint in the violence department either. Depending on which gun you hold, you can sever a foe's head, blast him until he's nothing but red drizzle and even blow him literally limb from limb as shown here.
Hopefully GT Interactive and developers Digital Extremes/Epic Megagames will license a PSX conversion, though if they do the BBFC are bound to give it their undivided (and unwanted) attention.

FORMULA 1 '98 IN DEVELOPMENT

Psygnosis are currently developing Formula 1 '98, the latest in their officially-licensed Formula 1 series. The game, to be released in Winter, 1998, features the 1998 driver's roster and a host of improvements. Formula 1 '98 becomes progressively more difficult as you play, so you won't find it painfully easy after playing for a month or ridiculously difficult for your first few drives. The car dynamics have been improved, two commentators give their views on the proceedings (we presume these are Murray Walker and Martin Brundle), and the pit lanes feature a motion-captured crew with whom you can communicate. There will also be a four-player link-up and split-screen option and functioning on-car mirrors. We've no screenshots from the game at present - only these incredible pieces of artwork, but rest assured we'll bring you as much as possible as soon as possible on this sure-to-be-a-hit game.







THIS MONTH WE 'AVE MOSTLY BEEN PLAYIN'

Dazza
Colin McRae Rally
We don't give 90%+ marks for nothing, you know...
Victory Boxing (demo)
Early days, but it's looking cool.
Drinking Games
I'm determined to leave with a bang!



Saul
Colin McRae Rally
One of the best drivers EVER.
WarGames
Ian's right - it's fantastic.
Music Tapes
It's great getting freebies for the Extras music column...

Ian
WarGames
Every home should have a copy of this wee gem.
V-Rally
Aren't you glad this one's back on Platinum?
Blast Radius
Top space shoot-'em-up action from Psygnosis.

Christian
Men in Black
Shoddy, tedious twaddle.
Bug Riders
It didn't improve from the version I previewed.
Atari Greatest Hits
Remember the curate's egg?

Alan
Blasto
Flash Gordon meets Roger Ramjet.
Tactics Ogre
Neat, but only available on import.

Doug
Road Rash 3
One or two niggles, but a great game overall.
Fluid
Ecco the Dolphin meets the Chemical Brothers?

Mike
Tombi
Nice try, but no cigar.
*G*Darius (demo)*
Can't wait for the PAL version...

overseas

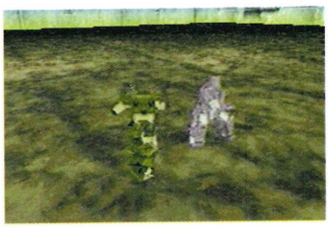
Three games this month in this, our round-up of PSX gems from across the seas which are unlikely to be released over here. These, unlike the import games reviewed in our X-Rated section, are strictly for connoisseurs...

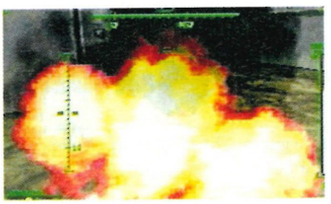
ARMORED TROOPER VOTOMS

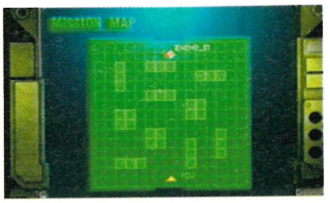
Don't ask us what a Votom is - we don't know, and we don't want to know. What we do know is that many of the options in Armored Trooper Votoms are in English, so the game is considerably more accessible than its title.
Once you're past the intro sequence and have assigned points to your various attributes (and this menu's in Japanese, folks), you're plunged into a one-on-one mech fight in an arena filled with barriers to hide behind - a sort of Laser Quest with higher stakes. The actual combat would be quite interesting if your machine wasn't so damned slow. You can slide across the floor by double-tapping the direction or strafe buttons, but this is achieved at the expense of control. Things improve as you progress, but not enough to justify the asking price - it's a classic case of too much rendered cut sequence and too little game.







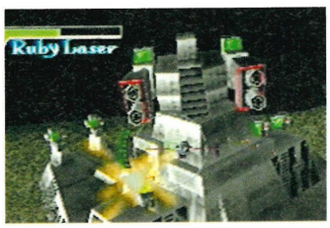












COWBOY BEEBOP

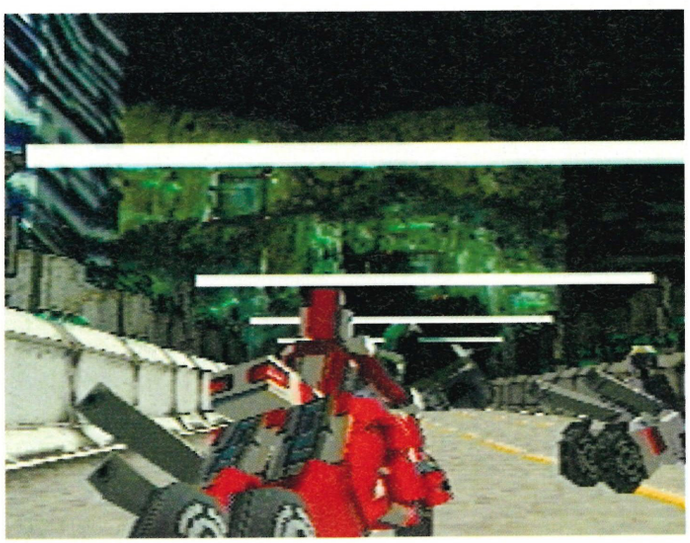
Another singularly Japanese title, this time in a game by Bandai. Again many options menus here are in English.
It's a shoot-'em-up in the Star Fox mould, with your craft flying into the screen. The way it swings towards the borders when performing a tight manoeuvre is disconcerting at first, but you soon get used to it. It's certainly better than Viper, where your main sprite often got in the way of the action, blocking your line of vision.
You blast the baddies by steering them into the circular sights seen in front of your ship - your guns then lock on. You can charge a special weapon by holding Circle and then pressing X for the shot. Strafing isn't easy as you need to deliver a sustained volley of fire to topple the terrors - can you score the kill before your craft flies over them?
At the end of each level is the traditional end-of-stage baddie. It's really easy to lose sight of this foe and fly around blind, unable to train your guns on it, but hey - this is the learning curve. It doesn't stop the game being a great blast, and certainly the Overseas best game this month.

SPEEDPOWER GUNBIKE

Don't you just love those Japanese mistranslations? They probably think it means something cool in English, but then this is the nation which named the Game Boy and called a game featuring a gorilla Donkey Kong because they wanted to make him sound stubborn.
The game's presented in a Manga style, which offers more than a passing nod to Akira. You control a sort of transformer creature which can become a superbike or a powerful mech at the press of a button. Speeding down the highway, you must dodge mines and (as the 'droid) punch your way through barriers which impede your progress. It's fun, though the controls take a bit of getting used to. Not 'cos they're awkward, but because you can't follow the Japanese commentary (or at least we can't).
Speedpower Gunbike is fun, but nothing special. The graphics hardly set the world alight, and you can't skip the opening sequence (not that we found, anyway). Also, if you're thrown from your bike because you got too close to a force field (you run back to it Road Rash style), you can find yourself thrown into the air as soon as you remount, leaving you unable to get on with the game. Fun but flawed, and nothing special.









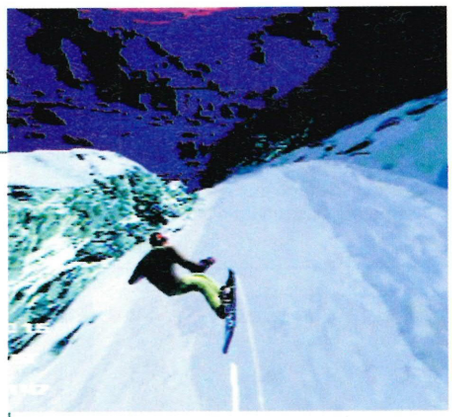


Gamespotting

Another month, another mound of marvellous games. This ish we've got two great games from Sony - Crash Bandicoot 3 and Spyro the Dragon already play really well, yet more improvements are planned for them. Look out too for Test Drive 5, Legacy of Kain II and the retro compilation R-Types...

Big Air

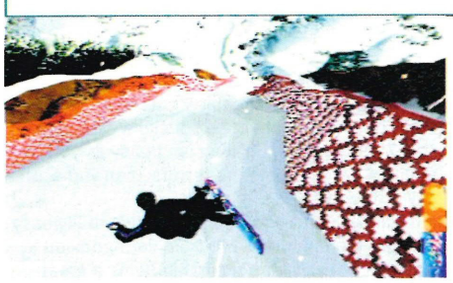
Publisher - EA
Developer - Pitbull Syndicate
Released - October



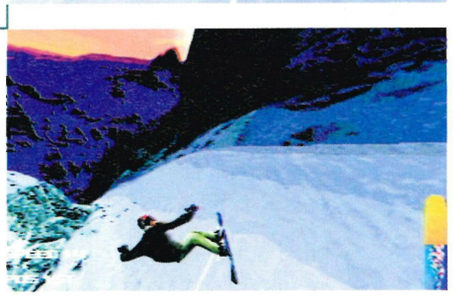
That's right - another bloody snowboarding game. The sport has become really popular over the last few years, even allegations of pot smoking and hotel wrecking by its Olympic competitors doing nothing to halt its rapid rise.

Big Air features licensed boards from Palmer, Ride, Morrow, Joyride and Arbor - we're sure the enthusiasts will be suitably impressed. Players get to compete in Half Pipe, Big Air (of course), Boardercross, Slalom and Free Ride competitions. As well as the usual split-screen two-player action, a link-up mode will also be offered.

According to EA, this is the most detailed snowboarding game ever. There's even a puff of powdered snow behind the boarders as they cane it down the slopes. The game will have a real fight on its hands if it's to take on Sony's CoolBoarders 2, but Electronic Arts aren't known for taking prisoners. This could well be the one to watch.

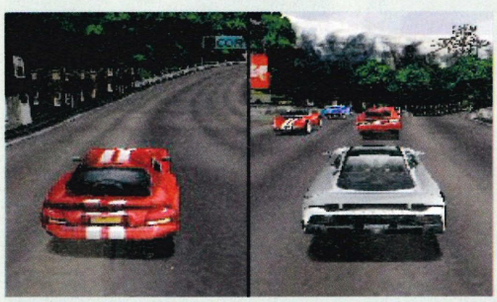




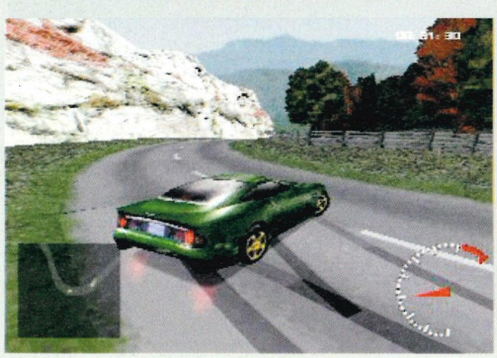


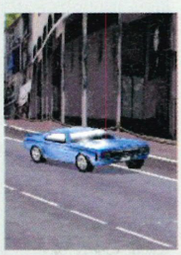
Test Drive 5

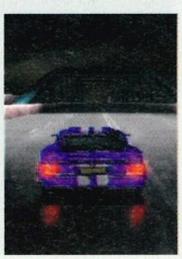
Publisher - EA
Developer - Pitbull Syndicate
Released - October

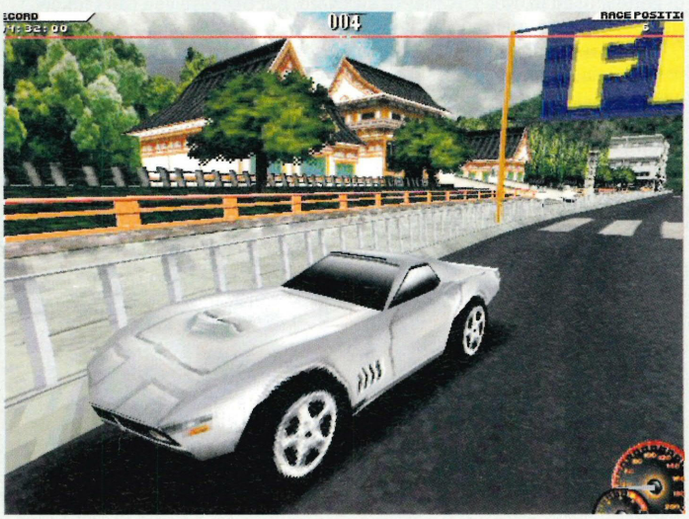


It's looking good; the screenshots blew us away. Test Drive 5 features new high-res tracks running at over 30 frames a second, branching technology to create alternate pathways including off-course driving and short-cuts (dunno what it means, but sounds great), split-screen competition and 28 licensed cars and 17 courses. There's also something called a MultiDynamic™ environment mapping system which offers realistic lighting and shadow effects when driving under trees.









Driver

Publisher - TBA
Developer - Reflections
Released - TBA







You've played Gran Turismo, and enjoyed the thrills or road racing. You've played Formula 1 and marvelled at its top sporting action. You've caned WipEout to death, with its sensational sci-fi theme. Surely every angle on the driving game has been covered by now? Maybe not...

The rather blandly-named Driver sees you taking charge of a getaway car, pursued through parks, streets and pavements. Other road users, people who obey the road signs and traffic lights, inevitably get in your way. How will you cope? It will be a while before you can find out, but here at EPM we're great fans of car chase movies such as The Italian Job and The Blues Brothers, and are definitely looking forward to this one...



Star Con





Publisher - Electronic Arts
Developer - Accolade
Released - October

Another space combat game, Star Con eschews Xenocracy's strategic set-up and instead concentrates on ship-shape shoot-'em-up action. The player chooses his or her race and blasts through the ranking by trashing ships of the opposing alien alliances. All the expected ship upgrades are there. Animated 'aliens with attitude' offer what appears to be a tutorial mode.

Star Con boasts a variable storyline, with the plot being affected by the player's actions, 40+ hours of play and co-operative and competitive multiplayer modes via a split screen. All graphics are offered in 3D texture-mapped polygons, and the old bugbear of black space and grey ships has been avoided. We've only seen static shots so far, but if it handles as well as it looks it could be a real winner.



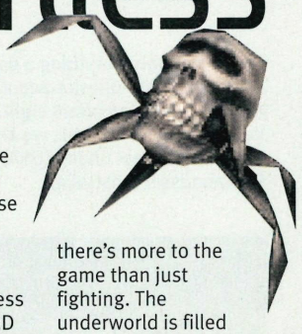




Akuji the Heartless

Publisher - Crystal Dynamics
Developer - Crystal Dynamics
Released - November

Akuji is dead - not a good start for the game's leading character, especially when he was killed by his Voodoo priest brother to disrupt the 'unnatural' peace brokered by their father. With his heart ripped out (hence the title), Akuji must locate the spirits of his ancestors and use their power to... You get the picture.



Akuji the Heartless is a fast-paced 3D action game with over 30 types of enemy and four monstrous bosses. Voodoo magic is featured as well as hand-to-hand combat, though there's more to the game than just fighting. The underworld is filled with dark secrets and devious puzzles. We've only screenshots to go on so far, but they look very interesting indeed - especially the babe with boobs as big as Bournemouth. Akuji the Heartless is released in November. Be there or slaughter a chicken in the middle of a pentagram...







Bio Freaks

Publisher - GT Interactive
Developer - Midway
Released - September







This blistering beat-'em-up looks set to feature in our Classic Moments in Videogame Violence feature. As the fighters batter their way through each other, the camera becomes spattered with blood. Take a wound to the chest and you spout blood like a crimson fountain. Get the picture?
The game is true 3D, with the characters able to side-step away from each other. Watch out for pugilists such as Minatek, Psyclown, Bullzeye, Sabotage, Ssado and Zipperhead. Each character can fly, use a force shield and fire a missile weapon as well as their usual punches, kicks, combos and special moves (which can be listed while pausing the game).
Bio Freaks isn't easy, even in Rookie mode, but its learning curve is a cliff worth climbing. This one could be a real treat.

Psybadek

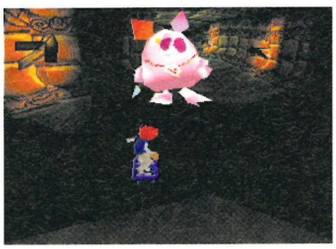
Publisher - Psygnosis
Developer - Psygnosis
Released - Winter '98





Snowboarding with a sci-fi atmosphere! Psybadek has you riding a 'hoverdek', a sort of stunt board which slides through the air rather than snow, sea or tarmac. Readers of 2000AD will be instantly familiar with the concept - remember Chopper?
Using strong anime-style graphics and a third person perspective, Psybadek sees you controlling Mia or Xako as they skysurf their way through four game zones, namely mountain, jungle, desert and underworld. Each zone has multiple levels and a few secret ones, most of which are specific to one character or the other.
Each time you rescue a friend from a boss character, he or she trades deks with you, upgrading your board. You need a keen board and solid on-dek weaponry to defeat the big baddie at the end of the game.
Psybadek looks like being one of Psygnosis' strongest releases this year, but we'll have to wait until nearer Christmas to find out.









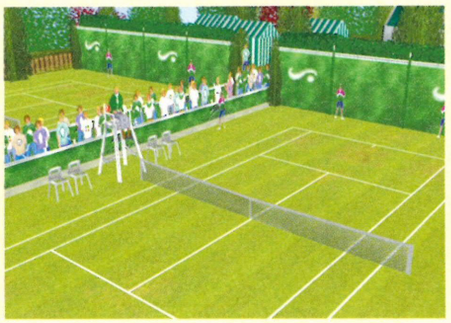
All Star Tennis '99

Publisher - UBISoft
Developer - UBISoft
Released - Autumn '98



This game has everything a good sports sim should - motion-captured graphics, a sophisticated 3D engine, real-life physics and a feeling of being there.
All Star Tennis '99 offers eight different courts from around the globe, in countries like England, France, Italy and California (yes, we know California isn't a country, but so what?). The pro-tennis player roster includes Michael Chang (USA), Richard Krajicek (Holland), Conchita Martinez (Spain), and Mark Philippoussis (Australia).

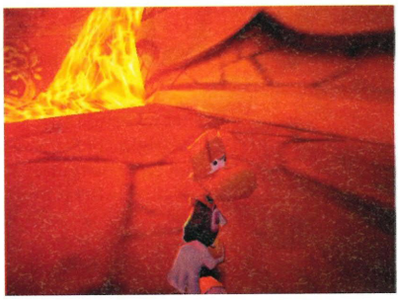






Rayman 2

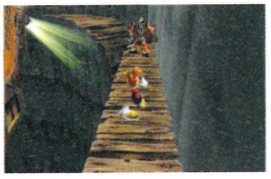
Publisher - UBISoft
Developer - UBISoft
Released - Early 1999

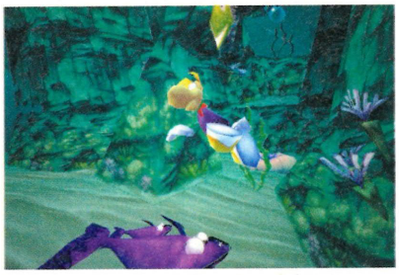


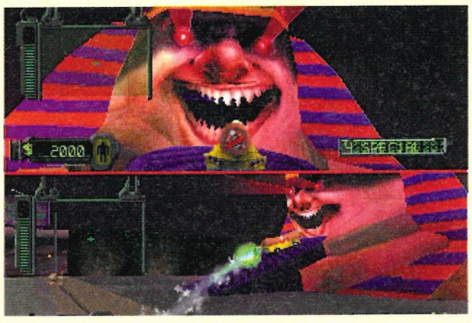
He's back - the cartoon character from the dawn of the PlayStation, famous for having no arms or legs (his hands and feet just float) is returning in a long-awaited sequel, cleverly-titled Rayman 2.
The plot is as wild and wacky as you'd expect. Rayman has been imprisoned by robot pirates, and must escape from a strange intergalactic zoo, rescuing his friends in the process. To beat the big baddie buccaneer, he needs all the ingredients for a miracle soup that opens the door to the Great Power. See - told you it was wild and wacky!
The game itself is a 3D platformer running at 30 frames a second. Also included is 75 minutes of music. Rayman's learned a few new tricks since his first adventure. He can walk, run, climb, swim, swing from vines slide on ice and even use his hair as a helicopter rotor. His magic fist can be used as a torch or grapnel too. The game will shine a light in this country early next year.

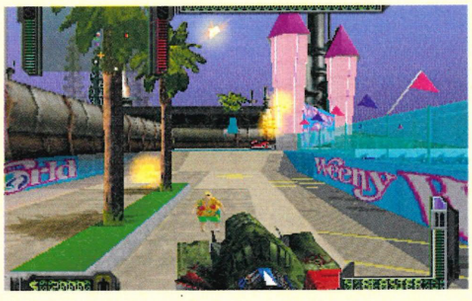








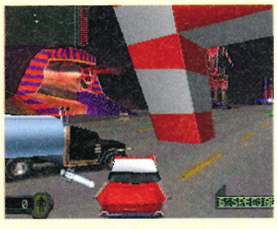




Rogue Trip

Publisher - GT Interactive
Developer - Single Trac
Released - November

Judging by these screenshots, 'Rogue Trip' is a very apt title. Set in a near future over-run by poverty, pollution and disease, the players indulge in a combat and strategy wrecking spree purely for the sake of it.
The tyrannical overlord Big Daddy (presumably no relation to the dead wrestler) has monopolised every vacation spot in the world, making it nearly impossible for the common man to take a holiday (where do they get their plots). The player must make cash by picking up tourists, smashing through Big Daddy's defences and get them to the holiday resort of their choice - a sort of Mad Max meets Butlin's complimentary taxis. Along the way, look at airports, national parks and famous monuments. Sounds weird, but here at EPM, we can't wait.







Rugrats

Publisher - THQ
Developer - THQ
Released - Winter '98

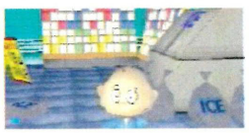
Anyone seen the TV programme on Nickelodeon? The Rugrats are one-year-olds who act like normal babies when adults are around, but when on their own they drop their toddler talk and converse with the language of five-year-olds. Tommy and his pals offer us a knee-high window on the world as they waddle through their little adventures.
The game too is also an adventure, of the arcade-action variety. It uses a Tomb Raideresque third-person perspective and features a non-linear storyline. There are more than 20 levels, fully explorable environments and three camera angles. Music and voices from the TV series are used.





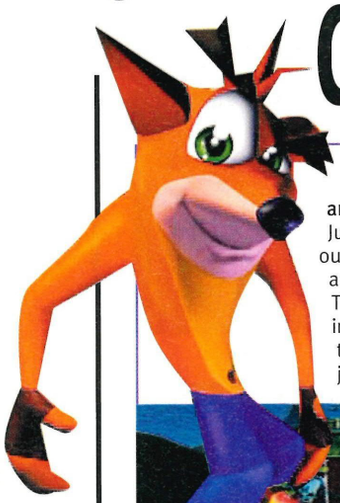






Crash Bandicoot 3

Publisher - SCEE
Developer - Naughty Dog
Released - TBA



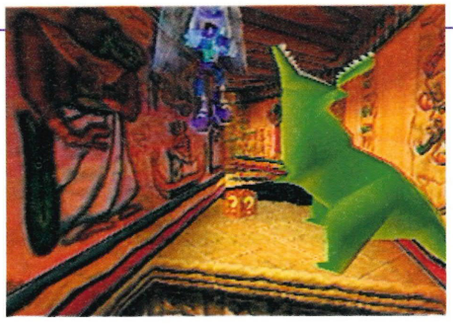
The PlayStation's first icon is back! Crash Bandicoot has never reached the lofty heights of the Sonic or Mario characters, but his games are playable, addictive and fun. The third in the series seems to offer no exception to this rule.

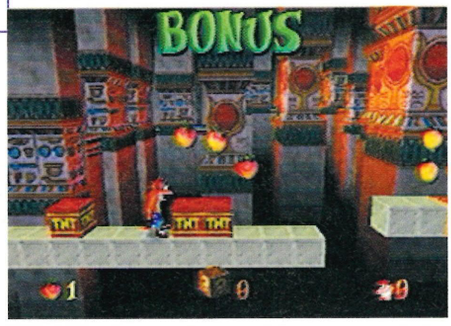
Judging by the preview disc, Crash 3 offers very little that's different to the first two outings. The graphics and game design are tweaked, but despite a few interesting additions, it's 'more of the same'. Still, if it ain't broke...

The biggest changes to the newie is the inclusion of Crash's sister Coco, who stands in for him on certain levels, and the underwater sections where he swims his way through shark- and mine-infested seas. Revolutionary it isn't, but it looks like being just as playable as its predecessors. What more could you wish for?

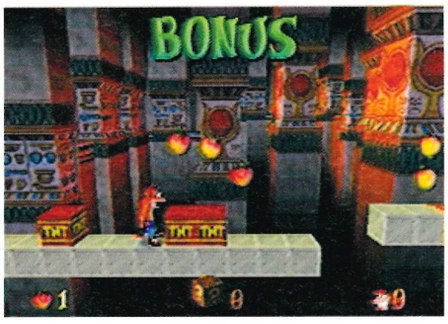


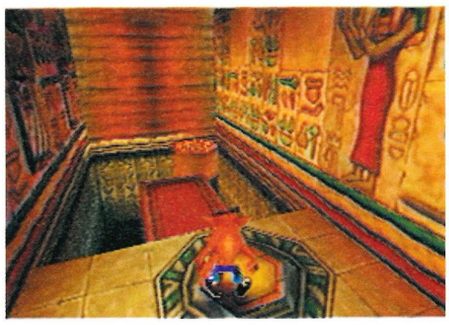












Spyro the Dragon

Publisher - SCEE
Developer - Universal
Released - TBA



What gives? Most games we cover in our Gamespotting section are so far from completion we have no playable code, so we use press releases and software company-supplied screenshots instead. Hence 'Gamespotting' - an early look at games for which we've too little information to cover in the Exposed section. Spyro the Dragon, however, is almost complete and the only reason we've not given it a mega-preview is because Sony released the CDs as news items only. It's also seriously cool.

The game is a 3D platformer in the Gex/Croc mould. Spyro's task is to rescue his fellow dragons. He can jump, glide while in the air (he's yet to master the art of flying), roll right or left to avoid shots and (of course) breathe fire to topple a foe. He can also perform a charging run.

From what we've seen of Spyro so far, it looks absolutely terrific. The game's still being worked on, so there's no point filling pages with info that's subject to change, but as soon as we can, we'll do a real number on it. We can hardly wait...







Player Manager - Season 98/99

Publisher - Anco
Developer - Anco
Released - November



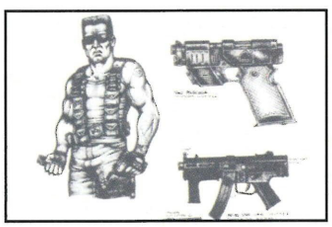
V.BORBORKIS		SHEFFUTD	1	28	2.5M	GRE
P.CHAPPLE	R	READING	2	32	0K	ENG
R.GIGGS		MAN.UTD	P	24	17.5M	WEL
H.HREIDASSON		C.PALACE	1	27	1M	ICE
S.ILLIC		CHARLTON	P	25	1.5M	YUG
N.JERKAN		N.FOREST	P	29	1M	CRO
L.JONES		BRIGHTON	3	19	250K	WEL
V.JONES		READING	2	32	0K	WEL
G.LE SAUX	L/R	CHELSEA	P	27	4.5M	ENG
B.MCKINLEY		BLACKBURN	P	29	2.5M	SCO
P.PESCHISOLIDO		FULHAM	2	28	1.5M	CAN
T.ROBBINS		WELLING	WD	34	0K	ENG
S.SELLARS		BOLTON	1	26	1.25M	ENG

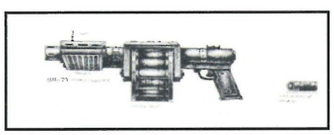


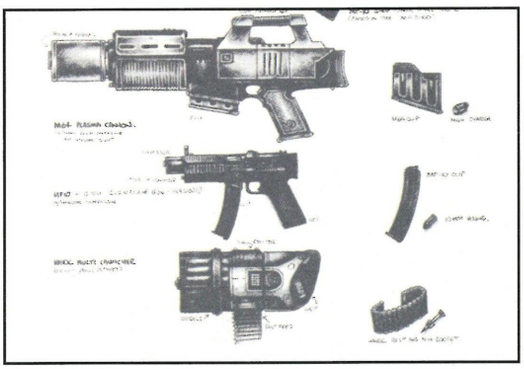
The original Player Manager was the very first football management game to appear on the PSX, and now it's back with the full 1998/99 season's rosters. The key to success in any footie management sim is being able to develop your squad effectively, and Player Manager - Season 98/99 emphasises this with 18 statistics for each player, representing his abilities, fitness, morale and other factors. The player can select five of these statistics and set their relative importance, simplifying the task of selecting players and assigning positions without sacrificing depth. You can strengthen your squad on the transfer market, get a loan to buy more players and assign scouts to find new players at give-away prices or recruits for the youth team.
All new signings made during the Summer of 1998 will be included in the final version, so by the time the game hits the shelves in November, it will be totally up to date.

Duke Nukem: Time to Kill

*UPDATE







We've not much more to say about Duke's forthcoming epic - check out Issue Five's Gamespotting piece for the alien-killing, time-travelling, wise-cracking details. It should be ready for a full preview next month, but for now, here's some snazzy concept art...

Publisher - GT Interactive
Developer - 3D Realms
Released - September



SCARS

Publisher - UBISoft
Developer - Vivid Image
Released - Summer '98

This one's almost ready - expect a full review next ish. SCARS (Super Computer Animal Racing Simulation) is a race combat game in the WipEout mould. Set in the year 3000, supercomputers have designed racers around nine of nature's most ruthless killers. The Lion LK, Tiger Shark and Rhino Roadster are built for speed but share their namesake's capacity for uncontrolled aggression.
Each car is rated on speed, acceleration and grip. Choose a vehicle that suits you. You also have to plan your route - do you stick to the main thoroughfare or take alternative tracks to recharge your car? Can you grab the right weapons and power-ups, and which do you use first?
SCARS features full light sourcing, detailed tracks and four difficulty levels. There's also a two-player head-to-head option, but whether or not this caters for the serial link we don't yet know - let you know next ish.











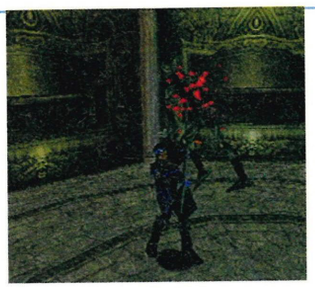
Legacy of Kain II: Soul Reaver

Publisher - Crystal Dynamics
Developer - Crystal Dynamics
Released - October

The first Kain game, Blood Omen, was an absolute corker, though its graphics didn't push the technology. Soul Reaver, set 1,000 years in the future, returns the player to the land of Nosgoth where spoilt nobleman Kain first became a vampire. The plot assumes Kain chose the dark option in the first offering, ruling the world as it died rather than sacrificing himself to save it.

You take the role of Raziel, one of Kain's first-born vampiric lieutenants. He's not particularly trustworthy, though - he is condemned and executed for transgressions against his master, and transformed after death by his journey into the underworld. He returns as Nosgoth's first reaver, a dark angel of death hungry for revenge and the souls of vampires. Could the reavers inherit the world from the vampires, as the vampires snatched it from the humans?

Unlike the first game, Soul Reaver uses Tomb Raider-style 3D graphics. According to Crystal Dynamics, it will feature an innovative hand-to-hand combat system, great AI for non-player characters and unprecedented interaction with objects within the game. The gothic atmosphere and cool puzzles enjoyed by Blood Omen are retained. Sounds great - here's looking forward to October...













Abe's Exoddus

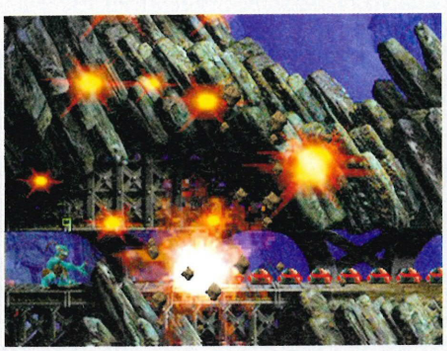
Publisher - GT Interactive
Developer - Oddworld
Released - September

Abe's back! GT claim Abe's Exoddus is 'everything Abe's Oddysee was and a whole lot more', which is no mean boast - the first game was amazing. Exoddus boasts 'more levels, more gameplay, more characters, more interaction, more movies and more'. The non-player characters are now more emotional, interacting among themselves. They 'fight, fart, and laugh among themselves'.

The GameSpeak, an important factor in the first game, has also been improved. The Mudokons now do more than just say 'okay'. Good job Abe's own speech has been improved too. His powers of possession are also beefed up, as are his attacks - he even uses his own farts as a deadly weapon.

In terms of the plot, Exoddus takes up where Oddysee left off. After Abe falls on his head while celebrating victory, three Mudokon spirits appear to Abe in a vision, begging him to come to Necrum, city of the dead. It seems the Glukkons are using the bones of the dead to make an ultra addictive brew called SoulStorm (mine's a pint). Why? Because Abe destroyed Rupture Farms, drying up the supply of bones to the Glukkons and forcing them to find an alternative supplier. Abe must infiltrate the brewery and rescue the trapped Mudokons - again.

If it's half as good as the first offering, Abe's Exoddus will still be a real winner; and GT say it's even better! Here at EPM we can't wait...





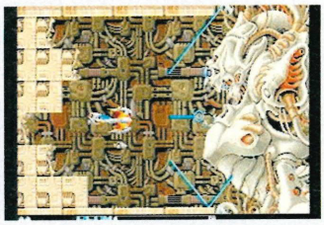


R-Types

Publisher - Virgin
Developer - Irem
Released - September



Irem's coin-op R-Type is generally regarded as one of the finest shoot-'em-ups of all time, and the sequel, R-Type 2, earned equal acclaim. No wonder Virgin snapped up the rights to release both games on a single retro disc! Although R-Type was basically a side-scrolling blaster, an already-crowded genre, slick execution and exciting innovation won through. For example, it was the first game where you could 'build' your shots by holding down the fire button; the longer you waited, the more powerful the shot on release. You could also collect a 'drone' ship which attached itself to the front or rear of your craft, destroying everything it touched and firing with you when you catapulted it forward or backward. Attack patterns were varied and interesting, each new situation demanding different tactics. Despite looking dated in the aesthetics department, the R-Types still cut it with their superlative gameplay. Newcomers and retro-heads alike should keep their eyes peeled for this one.

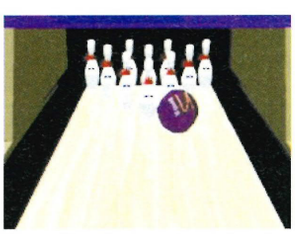


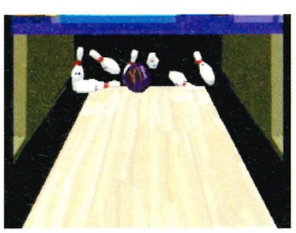


Brunswick Circuit Pro Bowling

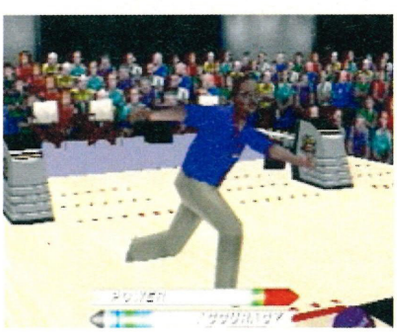
Some will balk at the very thought of a ten-pin bowling video game, but here at EPM we welcome innovation and originality. Do we really want every game to be a driver, platformer or beat-'em-up? This little number boasts 'the best-known licence in the sport' (though we've never heard of them), including all its tournaments, personalities and equipment. The rules are authentic too, including the brand-new Skins game. Thirteen pro-bowlers are featured (we never knew there were bowling professionals), and accurate physics models. You can even crate your own bowler. As would be expected, there are also multiple camera views, replay functions and a multiplayer mode - for up to six players, to be precise.

Publisher - THQ
Developer - THQ
Released - November









Streak

Publisher - GT Interactive
Developer - Single Trac
Released - November

'Rush into a secretive world of high-technology racing where only the best athletes have any chance of success', screams the press release. Sounds interesting. Streak, developed by the near-legendary SingleTrac team, sees the player riding a hoverboard called a GEMBlade. Snowboarding in mid-air, it you will. Or skysurfing, a sport Judge Dredd fans are well aware of.

The races take you through 'dynamic and ever-changing environments'. Your GEMBlade can float above any surface, be it concrete, asphalt, water or ice. Anything is a potential race course - players must blast their way through freeways, bounce off cars and even through a shopping mall. Don't try this at home, kids!







• Publisher •	• Developer •	• Release Date •	• Genre •
Infogrames	Zoom	TBA	Beat-'em-up

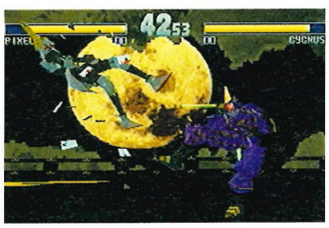
Zero Divide 2

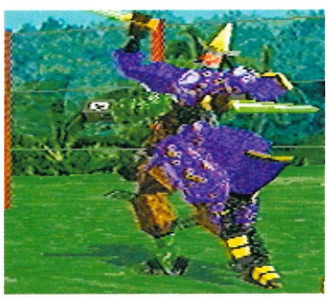
Divide by zero?











Another day, another beat-'em-up, but instead of fighting a motley crew of mystical ninjas and medieval warriors, Zero Divide offers a host of futuristic robot-style combatants to smash to smithereens.

Most of you will have dismissed the original Zero Divide as an above average but not very remarkable game, a criticism developers Zoom have taken into account. This does show on the preview version of Zero Divide 2.

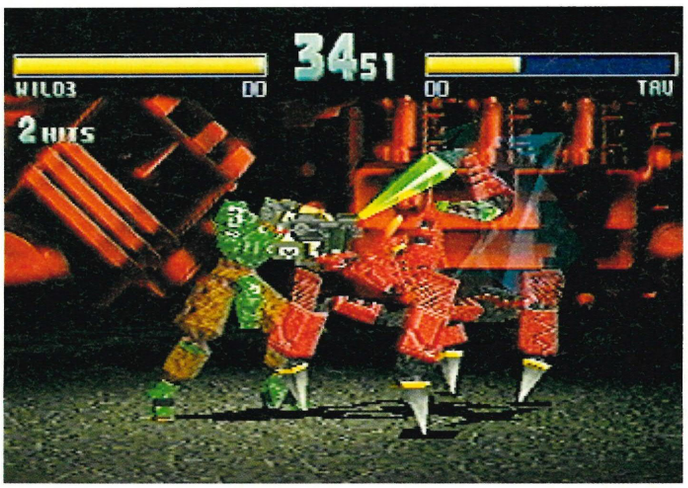
The action is slicker, faster and more polished than the original game and as well as new characters, there's now a massive 18 fighting arenas for you to choose from. Zero Divide 2 also retains one of the most original features from the first game; the ability to hang on the edge of the ring when you're knocked out. This makes for some cool set pieces where you can swing yourself back into play and pull off a spectacular flying kick. That's if your opponent doesn't stamp on your fingers and knock you off first.



The visuals on Zero Divide 2 aren't quite up to the standards of Tekken 3, but this allows the game to be very fast, although at the moment not overly responsive. As this is especially important on a beat-'em-up you can expect Zoom to deal with this before the release.

The press release stresses that Zero Divide 2 is simple to play, which to us isn't much of a positive boast. However, on playing the preview version we found that the learning curve seems to be set just about right. The game can be played with some success immediately, but there are a lot of extra moves and combos to master, which should take you an age.

Zero Divide 2 cannot beat Tekken 3 in the playability and graphical stakes. In fact, no beat-'em-up can. That's just the way it is. However, Zero Divide is looking to be a far better prospect than its predecessor, and from what we've played so far it looks like a contender for second place in this year's beat-'em-up race.





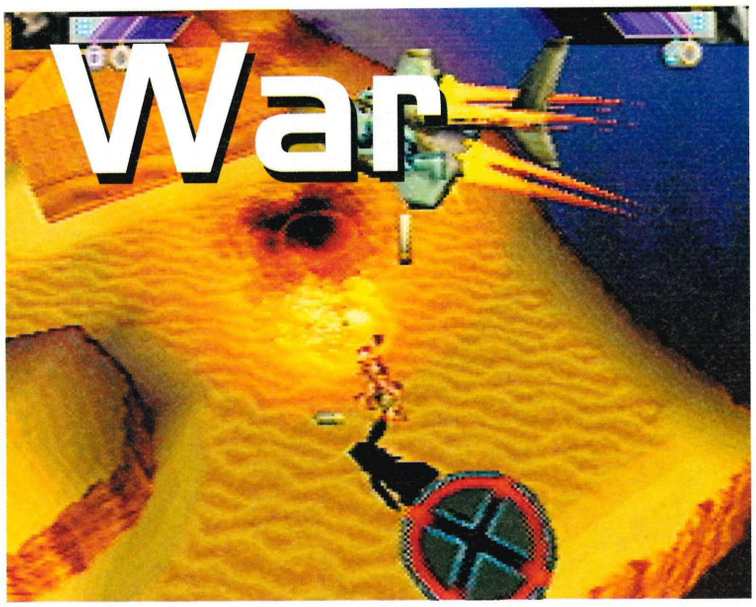
• Publisher •	• Developer •	• Release Date •	• Genre •
Crystal Dynamics	Crystal Dynamics	TBA	Action / Strategy

Unholy War

There's blood on the battlefield...







Long, long ago on the far-away planet of Xsarra (sounds like the intro to Star Wars, dunnit?), two tribes went to war. The magical Arcane tribe were attacked by the warlike Teknos, who sought the secret of their magical power. The battle raged on until both tribes were nearing extinction - would they keep fighting and lose it all or make peace and rebuild their shattered lands?

Happily, sense prevailed. The tribes negotiated a treaty which kept the peace for 400 years. They still didn't like each other, but they lived their separate lives, avoiding inter-breeding, which was forbidden by the treaty.

'And they all lived happily ever after?' Nah - that wouldn't make a good computer game, would it? The inter-breeding rule was inevitably broken and the result was two brothers. As they grew, they became bitter enemies. The two tribes each rallied around a brother, and the old battles were fought once more...

Sibling Rivalry...

Taking control of one of the tribes, you get to fight it out with your foe using a mixture of strategy and tactics.

Looking at the strategy map, you deploy your forces, mine minerals to sell and invest the dosh in new units and launch long-range attacks such as magical strikes. As the enemy forces near each other, the action switches to the battlefield map, where you indulge in some 3D arcade-orientated bloodletting.

The feud is fought over a series of missions, each of which has a set objective - a little like Command & Conquer. The 14 terrains are as rugged as the characters, and include deserts, forests, plains, air and seas. Watch out for the volcano too.

As well as the one-player campaign, there's also a couple of two-player scenarios, Strategy and Mayhem. The Strategy scrap has each player leading a group of nine troops, the object being to capture the flag, and in the Mayhem mode it's a case of 'last man standing wins'.

Unholy War is a difficult game to categorise. It's more than just a beat-'em-up, but far more arcadey than the traditional wargame. Crystal Dynamics hope it will appeal to arcade button-bashers and sim freaks alike, which is no simple task. Still, Command & Conquer did it...





CLASSY CHARACTERS...

Here are some of the cool combatants found in Unholy War...









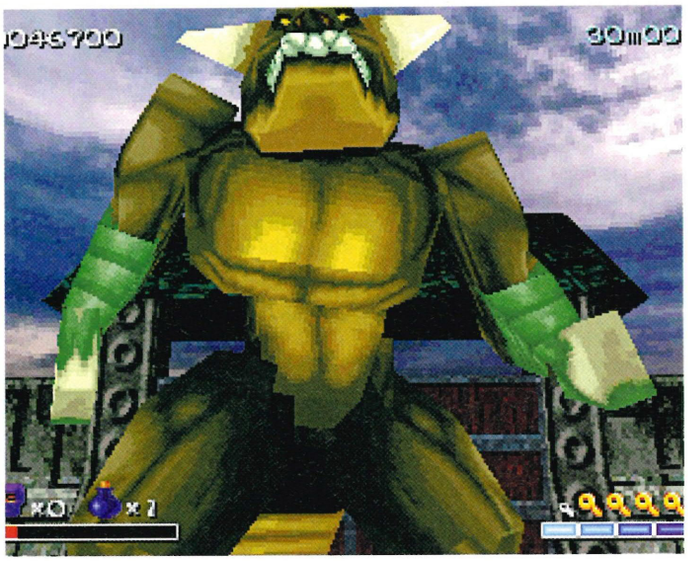
• Publisher •	• Developer •	• Release Date •	• Genre •
Eidos	Core	September	Beat-'em-up

Ninja

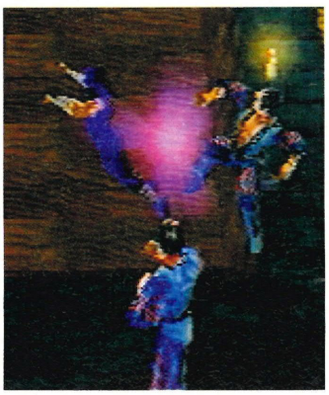




Exquisite visions of elegant violence from Croft's creators







Out-and-out arcade scrolling (as opposed to one-on-one) beat-'em-ups have been a bit thin on the ground in the past few years, with only Eidos' barely enjoyable Fighting Force springing to mind. The Double Dragon/Ghosts 'n' Goblins style of game has definitely been out of fashion, probably as it doesn't lend itself to the flash polygon-based 3D which software houses seem obsessed with using at all costs. However, Core (creators, of course, of that ultimate polygon game, Tomb Raider), have bucked the trend and put together a classy-looking arcade-bred game that harks back to some of the great and grey coin-ops of old.

Set in an ancient feudal Japan which has been infested with a host of demonic horrors, the player takes control of a magically aware ninja, who on his return from a long spiritual journey finds his homeland overrun by goblins, dragons, the undead and suchlike. Through a predominantly pseudo-isometric viewpoint, he stalks the often rain-swept forests and dank labyrinthine buildings of the cursed land, riddled with hordes of nasty creatures of an ever-increasing lethality. To ward them off he has his trusty fists and feet, plus an infinite amount of rapid-fire shurikens as standard equipment, while hidden about the landscape in caskets are more meaty weapon such as katanas, two-headed axes and quarterstaffs. Plenty of enchanted special attacks are also available that act as truly spectacular smart bombs (see boxout).

Although he's a ninja, stealth and sneakery doesn't really fit into the equation as you charge about the place, taking on swathes of murderous assailants at a time, surrounded on all sides almost constantly. These nasties span from the fairly mundane (warrior monks, karate-skilled zombies, authentically-detailed samurai)











to the decidedly exotic (oversized crabs, twin-headed hydra, the ubiquitous bloody great dragon), which usually lurk about at the end of a level waiting to do you in. To a man they're all sweetly drawn and animated, so much so that at first it was hard to tell whether they were polygon-based models or sprites because the level of fine detail was so high.

On top of this solid bedrock of visual appeal there are graphical bells and whistles aplenty, in particular the eyeball-grabbing lighting effects that accompany most of the magic spells the ninja employs. Azure waves of energy ripple and crackle, electrically-charged bolts look dangerously high-voltage and fiery flames lick and glow with a realistic ruddy warmth. The surrounding environment is also rendered with a sharp eye for unnecessary but aesthetically wholesome features, with top water ripple effects (in particular when it splashes at the ninja's feet) that are the best I've seen yet and dimly flickering oil lamps which add an eerie, shadowy ambience. All kinds of concealed areas and almost-hidden pathways exist for those that are willing to look, such as the submerged path of platforms along the beach front patrolled by pincered crustacean sentries. There are all kinds of fauna that scurry about underfoot too, like bob-tailed wabbits and red squirrels scampering up tree trunks. Most are mainly cosmetic additions (although running bunnies give you a scant warning of falling tree trunks) but are very cool touches nonetheless.

Avarice Assassin

As well as involving desperate fighting the action also revolves about collecting the precious coins your assailants drop when they are despatched, which can be exchanged at a convenient end-of-level trading post for weapons upgrades, smoke bombs and magical reloads. The chests mentioned above can contain shiny new offensive arms, enchanted potions or points-amassing treasure, but beware, as some are inexplicably booby-trapped and blow your bandaged arms off if opened. Concealed mantraps snap shut mercilessly if trodden upon, and hard-to-spot tripwires activate pitchforks that suddenly rain down from above and have to be dodged or an unpleasant impalation follows.

Keys to locked portals are also dotted about (usually in dangerous-to-get-to places), and lightning periodically arcs to the ground during storms and X-rays the ninja (in true Scooby Doo style) if you're not quick enough to dodge out of its way. The action is also interspersed with plenty of cut scenes that utilise the game's own graphics engine, so the transition between playing and watching is smooth and seamless.

Core Blimey

Core have been brave in the current games atmosphere by making an essentially straightforward game in a market currently over-obsessed with blinkered notions of what constitutes 'depth' and in depicting a slavish realism over anything else. The concept and playing of the game may be quite straightforward, but the execution is exemplary, with the attention to graphical perfection and simple yet fun gameplay coming out trumps. Longevity purists will probably scoff when Ninja arrives, saying 'But it's just an arcade game' and go moping back to FF blinking VII but those not pompous enough to shun clean arcade values will lap it up like thirsty dogs.






MR NINJA'S ABOUT TO GET A SEVERE CASE OF THE CRABS.




Mystical Ninja

The array of aggressive supernatural abilities the ninja has at his fingertips is powerful and varied, and above all amazing to look at. Here's but a few...



Our masked avenger spins on the spot in a deadly pirouette, sending magic bullets flying out in all directions and causing moderate damage to those they hit.



If in dire straits, the ninja can activate this flash-producing smoke bomb that teleports him back to the last level point. Bit of a wimp-out though, this one.



This extremely powerful and beautifully-drawn attack hits everything within a wide radius inflicting crippling amounts of discomfort on the bad guys. Nice one



The baraclava-clad a warrior holds his arms skyward and summons a searing storm of lightning bolts that home in on and atomise the enemy with utmost wattage.

• Publisher •	• Developer •	• Release Date •	• Genre •
THQ	Taito	September	Shoot-'em-up

G·Darius

A retro rave brought kicking and screaming onto the PSX...



WHY DO PROGRAMMERS PUT 'FREE PLAY' ON THE BOTTOM OF THEIR SCREENS? IT DOESN'T GIVE THE GAME THE COIN-OP CREDIBILITY THEY CRAVE; IT JUST LOOKS OUT OF PLACE.







Anyone remember Darius? The Taito coin-op that gobbled many a coin in the arcades? No? Well that's not surprising as the Darius series fared poorly outside Japan and America, but this didn't stop it being a cool blaster.

G•Darius takes up the thread, offering a modern blasting spectacular but with its roots firmly in the old school.

Like most shooters of this ilk, success in G•Darius is achieved through understanding the baddies' attack patterns and exploiting their weaknesses. Squadrons of smaller enemies can be felled in a jiffy by positioning your ship in the right place and stabbing the Fire button. More fearsome foes take multiple shots to topple, and often strike back with a variety of attacks. Here you must ride the storm, finding an area of the screen where you're safe or manoeuvring through a gap in their fire.

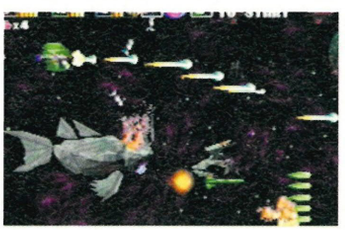
Like all blasters, G•Darius enjoys a host of power-ups, though here you can also capture an enemy's own weaponry and use it against future foes, a feature also seen in the brilliant Einhänder. Terrains include outer space, vast deserts, underwater depths and dense jungles. There are two different paths through the game's 15 levels, so replay value is high.

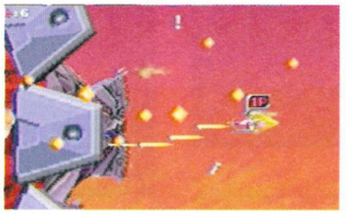
Fascinating Features

Well, you get the general idea; despite our copy of G•Darius being a finished Japanese version of the game, we'll wait until the PAL conversion is available before reviewing it - unlike lesser mags, we review what you get. Instead, here's a list of features to be found in G•Darius:

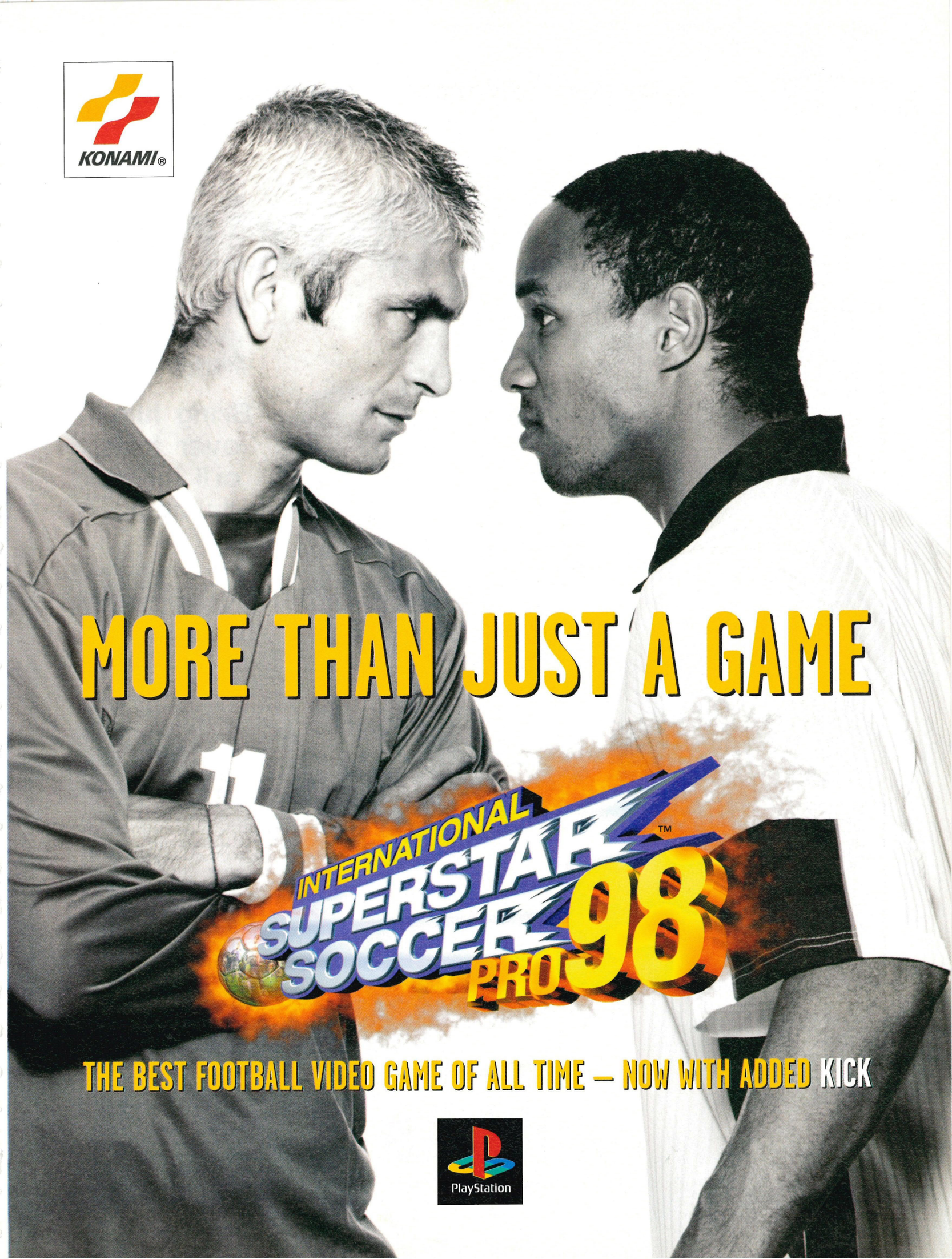
- Two-player action, with both craft on the screen at once.
- Legions of baddies, including over 30 bosses.
- Multiple power-ups for each weapon.
- Three game modes, including a Vs. Bosses battle, and eight skill levels.
- Fifteen classes of weapons and shields.
- Bonus weapons won by toppling enemy ships.
- Compatible with Dual Shock Controller.
- Save high scores to memory card.










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PlayStation

• Publisher •	• Developer •	• Release Date •	• Genre •
JVC	JVC	October	Sports Sim

Victory Boxing 2

Bring him over here; oi'll moida da bum...



With so many screenshots and some gorgeous photos of Vicki Lee, it seems a shame to fill these two pages with text - so we won't. Instead, here's a short and sweet outline on how the game's shaping up since our Gamespotting piece in Ish Six.

The second game in the Victory Boxing series is already out in Japan, but the European game will be a different fist of fivers indeed. The Jap offering is very much an arcade beat-'em-up, with a cartoony intro sequence to set the scene. In our game the cartoon has been replaced with some cool FMV, introducing the fighting more realistically and without its tongue in its cheek.

The battles themselves are far more strategic than in the import version. Here you must pick your punches and create combinations - just like a real boxer. The fighters have two energy bars, one for health (you fall when it reaches 'zero') and the other showing your general level of stamina. Conserving energy is an essential skill in Victory Boxing 2 - don't punch yourself out while your foe covers up and then get clobbered later in the fight. Again, this is realistic - check out a video of Muhammad Ali taking the Heavyweight title from George Foreman.

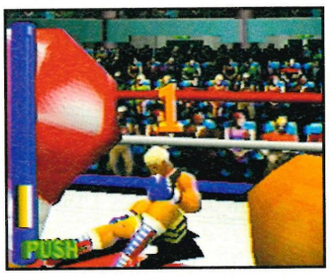
The game has improved immeasurably from the version we saw in Issue Six. It's no longer slow and cumbersome, and different punches and combos have been added. Both of these things will improve still further by the time it's released. The camera is as silky-smooth as Chris Eubank's robes too. You can position it in several places, including over the ring, under it (the canvas floor becomes transparent) or on the ropes. You also have two own-eye perspectives on offer, allowing you to view the action from your own or your foe's point of view. When you take a punch in these perspective, the screen flashes red. The graphical improvements are more than just cosmetic too. Punch your opponent's face often enough and it starts to bruise and bleed, so you can gauge how effective your attacks are.

Victory Boxing 2 should be available by October, and looks set to eclipse the first Victory Boxing game. Enough talk - bring on the gorgeous, pouting Ms Lee...

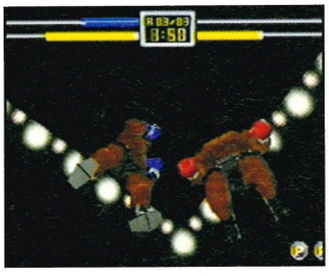


Neat tattoos - looks just like Michael Heseltine.









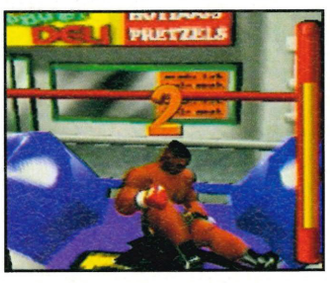




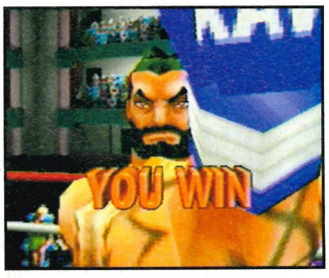












• Publisher •	• Developer •	• Release Date •	• Genre •
Telstar Electronic Studios	Candlelight Studios Ltd	Autumn 98	Shoot-'em-up

Assault



Gryzor and Contra revisited...

It was the long, hot Summer of 2197. The peaceful, utopian city of Arcadia was barely awake, its citizens contemplating breakfast and the day ahead as they lay in their beds. Few saw the mysterious giant object as it plummeted towards the sleeping city, but there was no mistaking the devastation it caused as it thundered to the ground. Many died.

With many survivors fleeing the devastation, reports are coming in that mutant aliens are roving the wreckage, spreading like an infectious disease. Could the mysterious object be a space ship? The creatures must be wiped out before they reach another city, and the craft (whatever it is) destroyed or sealed off to prevent further danger. Nothing must escape.

As part of a rapid deployment force specialising in heavy weapons combat in hostile alien environments, Sgt Reno J Washington and Major Kelly Doyle are air-dropped into an area of the ruined city just outside the impact crater. Your task is to blast your way to the craft itself and deal with it - it doesn't matter how, just get rid of the damned thing. Any aliens you encounter on the way must be terminated with ruthless efficiency; your back-up team will mop up any stragglers. Air support drop supplies as you need them.



Yes, it's a silly plot - why not send an army to tackle the craft instead of two people? Why don't the powers-that-be give the soldiers the bonus weapons before they start instead of air-dropping them at various points during the game? Why is it that... Oh, what the hell - this is a shoot-'em-up; if it works, who gives a fig about the plot?

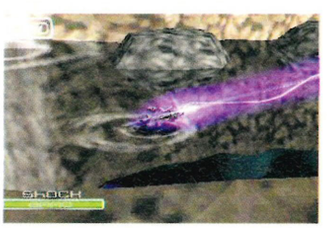
Gun Law

From what we've seen so far, Assault works just fine. The player gets to control Kelly or Reno, encased in





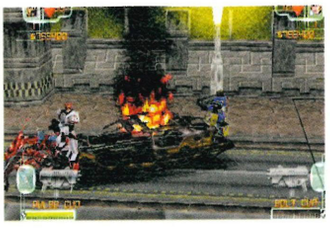












armour and wielding a huge, throbbing weapon (oo-er). The environment is true 3D, but the game doesn't seem cursed with the awkward controls which dog other such titles.

The player has a huge arsenal of abilities at his disposal. You can raise or lower your weapon to tackle crawling or flying creatures, hold a shoulder button to strafe and change between your usual array of weapons. Jump over obstacles, of grab an overhead construct and swing along like a rather brutal monkey. You can play on your own, or team up with a buddy and have both characters on the screen at the same time (but fighting their way through whole new areas unavailable in one-player mode). Forget Contra: Legacy of War; this is the true successor to those Eighties arcade classics such as Gryzor, Contra and Probotector.



Even at the start of the game, the team are blessed with some impressive firepower, with guns such as the Multi-Phase Pulse Rifle and Magnetic Bolt Accelerator available from the beginning. Each character can hold up to five weapons. Later on you can find an Ionic Flame-thrower or a Scythe Laser. Towards the end you get some incredible alien weapons boasting unbelievable destructive power.

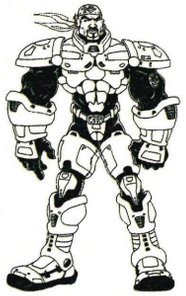
The on-screen destruction is especially impressive, with terrific explosions and bullet effects lending a real immediacy to the proceedings. It's Force Feedback compatible too. The polygon-based creatures look far smoother on the screen than the close-up images suggest, though thankfully they retain an angular strength and power. The game as a whole covers 40 zones spread over six distinct environments, so it isn't a case of packing quality into a ridiculously short game either.



The PlayStation needs a single-minded 3D blaster - most shoot-'em-ups these days seem to mix the genre with a little strategy, each claiming to be 'the thinking man's blaster'. There's nothing wrong with this of course, but what wouldn't we give for a good, old fashioned slaughterfest with a spectacular body count and high-thrills action? Assault looks like it could offer just that.

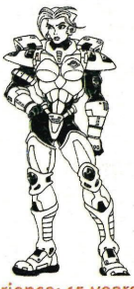
Meet the Squad

There are two characters to choose from in Assault - the babe and the big bugger.



• Sgt Reno J Washington
Age: 36
Height: 6 feet 5 inches
Weight: 260 lbs

Combat Experience: 18 years in the field, including eight years frontier defence on outer world colonies and three years quelling the Android Rebellion in the South American jungle. Speciality: Heavy energy weapons. Widely regarded as a leading authority in the research of alien artillery.



• Major Kelly Doyle
Age: 28
Height: 5 feet 6 inches
Weight: 140 lbs

Combat Experience: 15 years' service, including four years fighting renegade droids in New York after losing both parents at the age of 13. Eight years' urban pacification during the construction of Arcadia. Trained as a covert assassin prior to joining the squad. Speciality: Sniper weaponry and explosive devices.

DRESSED TO KILL...

This is how we'll get dressed in the future...



First we'll stand in a circle of light - the spotlight's on you, guys!



A robotic hypodermic syringe will inoculate us against all sorts of futuristic bugs. Ouch!



We'll be bathed in green light - for some reason.



A robotic arm descends, fitting your neat shiny Kevlar body armour. You don't have to lift a finger.



Then you're bathed in red light - for some reason.



Finally, a robotic hand gives you a weapon.

BRABEN BITES BACK!

GROLIER INTERACTIVE (UK) Ltd

FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS

EPM talks to top PSX programmer David Braben and checks out his newest rave, V2000...

David Braben is a busy man. Although a veteran games programmer (his first hit title dates back to 1984), he hasn't got a list of titles as long as a joypad cable under his belt. But he's still a busy man. Why? Because Braben's games emphasise depth and quality rather than throwaway immediacy. You can't rush a Braben game, but you won't get bored of them quickly either.

Never was this more true than for his forthcoming release, V2000. Boasting incredible attention to detail, this 32-bit update on Braben's 1988 rave looks set to take the PSX by storm.

Your world is under attack from an unpleasant virus brought there by alien insects, many of them similar in shape to our own Earth-based creepy-crawlies. The similarities end there, though - alien spiders don't fall into the bath and scare little girls, they batter their way through the walls and swallow them whole. The insects' home world, which the player eventually reaches, is degenerating quickly forcing them to flee to more friendly climes. Trouble is, they bring with them the dreaded red virus which spreads like wildfire, contaminating all it touches and wiping out the flora and fauna already there - not to mention the people. This is not a battle of good and evil - the player's world is not the Earth, but a terraformed planet elsewhere in the galaxy. You came to it for the very same reasons the aliens now do - to survive, the Earth being overcrowded. Once again, the aliens aren't guided by evil, but the instinct of survival.

You take the role of a military flying person, piloting a futuristic ship with flight and hover capabilities. Its limited weaponry can be upgraded with new ones found or researched throughout the game. At first, the trickiest part of the game is learning to fly the damned thing - it's a bugger to control, but mastering it gives intense satisfaction.

Germ Warfare

Each level's overall objective is the same - drive off the aliens and eliminate the virus. There are also secondary objectives to tackle along the way, so you need to consider and explore. Scattered around the playing area are the human inhabitants of the planet. Liberate them by lifting them up into your ship and carrying them to your base. Some are too scared to leave their houses, so a little cannon fire is needed to change their minds.

People taken to your base are trained as scientists and engineers. This takes time, but the process is invisible to the player. All you need to do is drop off your new recruits at the base and wait for them to come running out of the training room and build factories. This is where your weapons upgrades and fuel refills are made. Later still you earn three major items, the Trundler which hovers just above the landscape spraying virus-infected areas, a Large-Capacity Cargo Hold to carry up to five people at a time and Big Mobile Guns to protect areas of the map.

In total, there are over 25 weapons that must be invented or found, augmenting your bog-standard (but still deadly) machine gun. A Bouncing Bomb bounces along the ground until it meets a solid object, a Flamethrower roasts insects (but not fire creatures) and the FGH Missile flies along at a constant height, hugging hills and vales without becoming too radar visible. Homing Missiles, Lasers and Time Bombs are all self-explanatory. An Energy Drain weapon puts aliens to sleep, but only for a short while, and the Water Cannon is great against fire. Watch out too for Smart Bombs, Flares, Shrapnel Bombs and even a Possession Ray which lets you take over the body of an enemy creature.

Lucious Levels

There are 36 levels in the game, based on six alien world types. They can be completed in any order, except for the Alien World which has to be tackled last. Each has its own feel and graphical style for you to blast - any graphic can be destroyed if you wish to waste ammo. See what we mean about attention to detail? The six worlds are;

- Green World: A medieval landscape with rolling hills, castles, lakes, windmills and peasant villages. it's not difficult to fly around, offering few large obstacles, and most of the ground is at the same height.

- Underwater World: This world is set under the ocean - as if you hadn't guessed. There are deep, dark canyons and strong water currents to contend with. There are some lovely shoals of fish in the background. It's populated by little men in diver's suits.

- Rock World: Sounds interesting; unfortunately you're not out to rescue Motörhead, Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden from the evil clutches of the Spice Girls (and they wouldn't thank you for doing so). It's actually a rocky terrain which looks similar to the Grand Canyon or the Nevada desert.

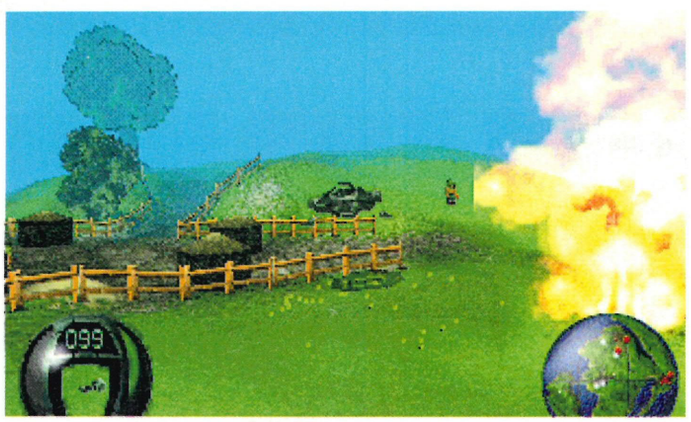
- Ice World: There's always an Ice World, isn't there? This one's very windy, with thunderstorms, lightning, and blizzards. Makes flying very difficult.

- Swamp World: This is the traditional jungle world, with giant trees offering real obstacles to the player.

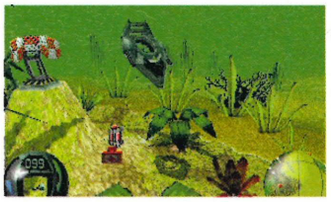
- Alien World: This is the alien's home planet. There are no people to rescue here (for obvious reasons), but lots of alien hives to destroy. Graphically, it's a fiery place, full of lava pits and steaming wastes.

Tech Specs

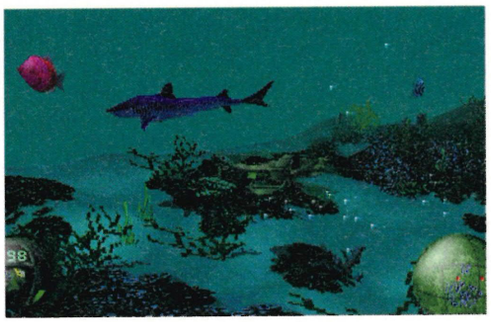
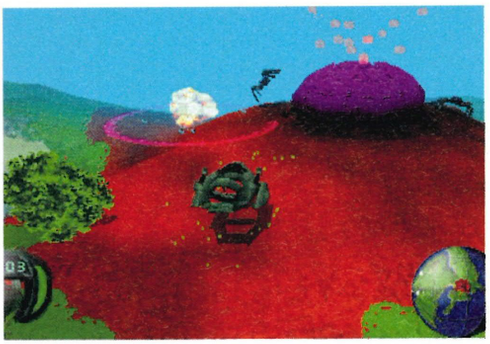
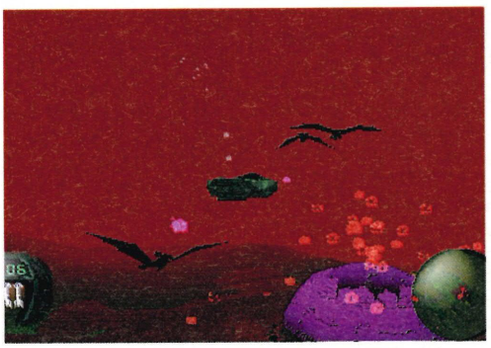
David Braben and his Frontier Developments team have included many special effects and weather patterns in the game. Some of these are just for show (nothing wrong with that), but others have a huge effect on gameplay. In the Ice World, for example, it often snows. This is







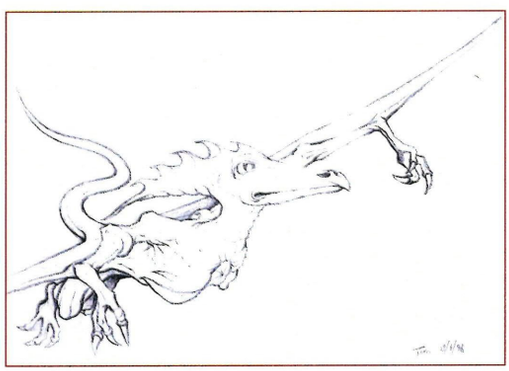
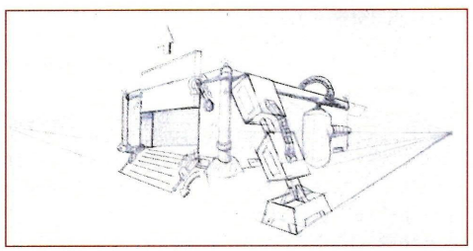


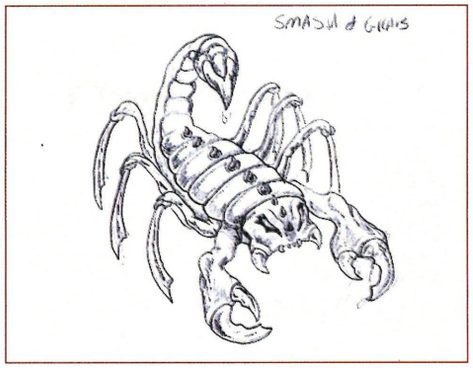





quite useful for indicating wind direction, as this blows your craft around and effects handling.
Some of the boulders on Rock World can be shot and moved, rolling around like giant pool balls. Roll them down a hill or over an alien, or maybe block up a hole.
Watch out too for the currents in Undersea World, which carry the player's ship along, and the beams of light shining through the forest canopy in Swamp World.
The creatures are a superb technological innovation. They're not animated in the usual way using 3D flick in Wavefront or 3D Studio, as are most 3D animations (or so we're told). Instead they're offered in real time, making them walk convincingly without their feet sliding across the floor Scooby Doo-style. They can also brace themselves for impact and recover in a convincing way, and move their heads to look at the player. They also live out virtual lives and pursue their own goals - they don't just wander around waiting to be shot.
Watch the skies and you soon see flying creatures. These flap their wings to gain height and glide to lose it, moving their body to change direction just like real birds. As well as giving a cosmetic realism to the game, it also advertises the bird's intentions through its body language. They open their beaks before spitting acid too, giving you a chance to dodge.
Lighting effects are another area that hasn't been neglected. All solid objects cast shadows, giving the world a realistic 3D feel. Explosions, bullets and lightning illuminate the surroundings, and the clouds cast moving shadows too. Needless to say, your own craft casts a shadow too. This is essential for judging your height.
V2000 is due to hit the shelves in September, but the team are already ahead of schedule. Watch out for the definitive review right here in EPM!

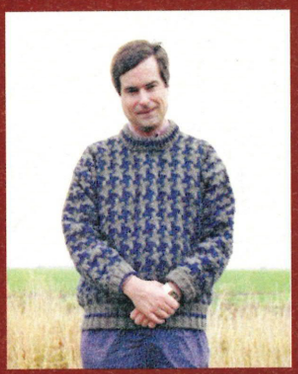
CONCEPT ART

We've been given some of the preliminary sketches used for designing the fixtures and monsters. Nice, aren't they?

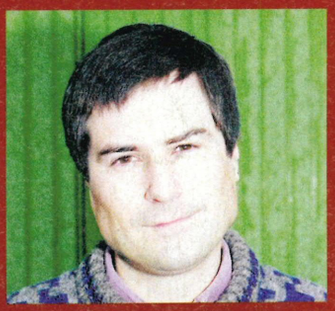
DAVID BRABEN PROFILE OF A REAL GAMES LEGEND



While still at university, David Braben and Ian Bell teamed up and programmed Elite for the BBC Micro in September 1984. By the end of the year it was ported to dozens of platforms, including the Commodore 64, Spectrum and later the PC, Amiga and Atari ST. There was even a version released on the NES. A remarkable mix of space trading and shoot-'em-up action, Elite proved so popular it sold an unprecedented 1,000,000 units and still has a cult following even today. Not bad for a first attempt!
Braben's second hit came in 1988 with Virus. It was developed on the Archimedes and given away with the hardware under the title Zarch, the name being changed when it was ported to the Commodore 64, Amiga and Atari ST. It was an immediate success and was voted the best 16-bit game of 1988.
After the success of Virus, Braben returned to Elite once more and prepared a sequel, Frontier: Elite 2. It took him an incredible five years to complete, being released on the Amiga, Atari ST, PC and CD32 in October 1993. It held a top three position in the Gallup charts for over six months, becoming the best-selling home computer game of 1993. This is despite the game being put onto the market before it was ready and against Braben's wishes.
In 1994 Braben set up Frontier Developments. The Cambridgeshire-based team is made up of five programmers (including the man himself), three artists and two administrators. The team are currently working on V2000, the sequel to Braben's decade-old hit, Virus. The game will be published by Grolier Interactive this September on the PC and PlayStation. It's the first game to use the independent development environment developed by the Frontier team to make it easier to program titles for more than one machine. The system has already been licensed by other developers, including for non-games real-time applications.

THE CREATOR SPEAKS...

EPM speak with David Braben, Managing Director of Frontier Developments and industry legend.



• How did you get started in the video games industry?

Back in 1981 I had written a number of games for my own amusement on my Acorn Atom. I had also worked on a space combat game called Fighter. This later became Elite. I couldn't afford a BBC Micro at the time, but that was the machine I wanted to do the game on. At university I met Ian Bell (who had a BBC Micro), and we decided to collaborate. Incidentally, Elite was turned down by Thorn - EMI, then a prestigious software house, because it was 'too different', 'didn't have three lives', and that nobody would be prepared to fiddle around saving their position.

• What do you remember as milestones in your career?

I guess getting Elite published must have been the biggest. As many people may know, it was a huge success, particularly in the UK. This went as far as a ten-minute interview on Channel 4 news in 1984 to talk about why it had been so successful as everyone in the newsroom was apparently playing it!
Releasing the original Virus was also a milestone. This was very different to what was around at the time. It received some amazing quotes, like '3D: Is this the future of computer games?' It seems incredible now, but this was just about the first filled solid 3D game back in 1987/1988.

• Do you miss the early days of creating games almost single-handedly?

Yes. Sometimes I think the corporate atmosphere in many games companies stifles creativity. There is also now a huge element of financial risk for both publishers and developers, which greatly discourages experimentation and producing anything too different from what is out there now. Despite this it is these very 'safe' games (eg the numerous C&C derivatives) that tend to flop, or at least underperform, as people don't generally like a clone.

• As one of the first vector-based games on the 8-bit formats, Elite was quite advanced for its time but a commercial risk as well. Were you surprised by its overwhelming success?

Yes and no. During the last few months before the game was released I found it quite nerve-wracking! I had felt that it had been too easy - if we could do this sort of thing then I was expecting others to do it too. I was afraid something else would come out just before 'Elite' and overshadow it. I was confident if this didn't happen it would do well, but the comments that Thorn EMI had made did worry me a little - maybe they were right!

• Which part of Elite proved most attractive?

The longevity - the fact that you start to identify with your Commander. I think each part of the game was important, but they all pull together to reinforce this. Without the 3D graphics (cutting edge for the time), I think people wouldn't have felt so drawn in, but I also think the game world worked quite well.

• Why did you split with Ian Bell, the co-developer of the game?

We both worked very hard indeed on the original 'Elite', and the many conversions to other platforms which followed. Some of these were done by ourselves, others by third parties, though even the third party conversions took a great deal of work for us. In 1985 Ian and I started work on an 'Elite 2'. This was on the BBC Micro and Commodore 64 (the current machines of the time). It was a very ambitious project. We worked out who was to do what between us, and started work. By this time we had earned a good deal of money, and I think Ian had lost his enthusiasm, and had other interests, particularly martial arts. After some months I had finished the first elements of 'Elite 2' that I was down to do (eg. the 3D graphics), and wanted to start on the next elements. These relied on the elements Ian should have finished by then, but he hadn't. In fact he had barely started.
Coincidentally, Acorn offered me a prototype Archimedes computer, and wanted a demo game for it, which was to be launched in three months. Ian and I discussed it, and I went ahead with the demo game (called Lander) while he decided whether he wanted to continue with Elite 2.
I completed the demo Lander on time, and a game called Zarch (a cut-down game like Virus) followed on shortly after. By this point Ian still had not decided and had not got very far with his work on Elite 2. I was a little annoyed by this as he would typically not turn on his computer for weeks at a time.
At that point I suggested I would convert and improve Zarch for the Amiga, ST and possibly the PC (all these machines had by then been released), and by the end of that six-month period Ian was to have decided what he wanted to do.
After the release of Virus (to much critical acclaim, including 16-bit Game of the Year, 1988) Ian and I had a serious discussion. Also it seemed madness at the time to continue on the 8-bit platforms when the 16-bit ones were then current. Ian didn't want to go ahead with Elite 2, and we agreed amicably that I would do Elite 2 on my own, and pay him royalties on the sequel. This was what became Frontier and was nothing to do with the original Elite 2.
Ian has since become very difficult to deal with, for me at least, which is a shame. I think this is largely because his substantial income stream from me has finally dried up, despite not having worked on any commercial projects (as far as I know) since Elite.

• Are you ever going to do a follow-up to Frontier II: First Encounter?

Yes, though this will be some way in the future. The original game release was tragic, Gametek - now Take Two - released it prematurely with known bugs still there. This left me with very bad feelings about this game, though I think the game design itself was OK, so I resolved to do other things before doing another Elite/Frontier game. I would very much like to do the definitive Elite - the Final Frontier, if you like! We have a lot of ideas for such a game and will do it one day.

• Virus was very much hailed for the feel of flying the craft which was very hard to learn initially but very satisfying once you mastered the controls. Are you going to change this for the sequel?

Yes. The challenge we set was to make the feel of the craft as similar as possible to the original for the experienced player, and yet to be easy to pick up for the beginner. I think we have achieved this.
The way we have done it is to put in a lot of features to stop the player crashing or getting stuck. Firstly there are now two modes that the craft can be in. It either works as a hovercraft, driving a bit like a skiddy car, or full flight (like Virus). When in full flight, though, V2000 is continually detecting which way you are going. We chose the name V2000 instead of Virus 2000 for several reasons. 'Virus 2000' is a bit of a mouthful, but also since the release of the original the connotations of the word 'Virus' have changed substantially, because of AIDS and computer viruses, unheard of back in 1988.

• Are there also some (hidden) mission objectives which the player may consider and explore but doesn't have to?

Yes, many. The game is not linear, and there are many ways of getting through it, though finding hidden objectives makes completing the game much easier.

• As there is no actual score in V2000 are you going to choose a ranking system instead?

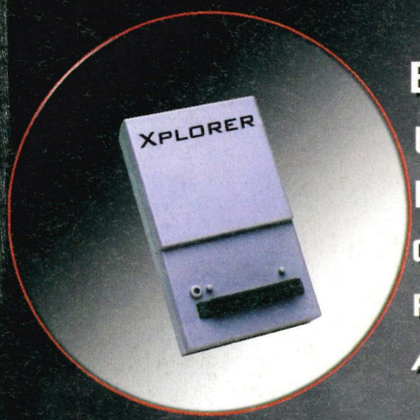
Yes - there is a ranking system in the game. Between worlds you also get to see a map showing all the worlds you have visited. Initially this is mostly black, but gradually gets filled in as you progress. The player can get a hint at hidden worlds simply by seeing large areas that are still black.

• Any more similarities between V2000 and Elite - better weaponry and devices or pick-ups?

I suppose the concept of added extras to your ship is similar to Elite. Even the fact you can increase your cargo capacity, though the way it is done is very different - there is no game money, for example.

• Which part of the game has proven the most difficult to realise?

Balancing all the worlds and the different routes through them. I think it is a real shame in a game if you discover a really easy way around all of the puzzles.



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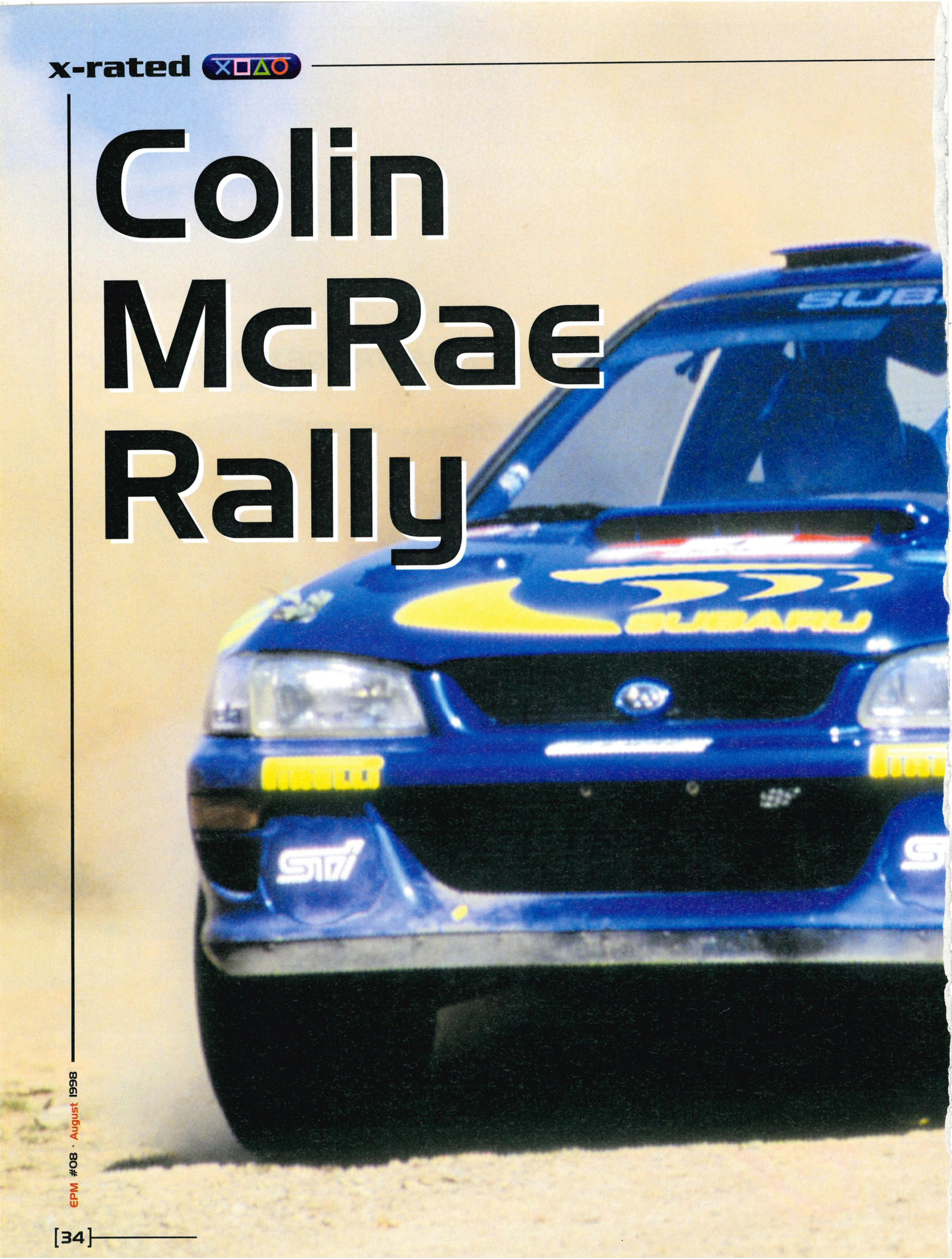
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Colin McRae Rally





V-Rally, Pah! GT, Pah!, enter Colin McRae...

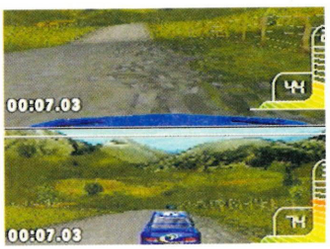
Gran Turismo looks set to be the definitive driving game, and Colin McRae Rally doesn't attempt to alter that fact. The two games cannot be compared, yet they're equally as great as each other. A bold statement I know, but read on, and I'll explain...

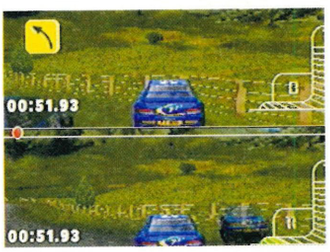
A rally simulation has got to be something really special to grab your interest and keep it, purely because you rarely see any other cars on the track. Codemasters have overcome this problem for Colin McRae Rally, though, not by losing the realism and adding cars to race against, but by upping the realism and keeping everything as close to the real thing as possible.

'Still boring', you'd think. Not so; Colin McRae thrives on its realism and thus delivers the most challenging, intricate and above all realistic racing game we've ever seen. Colin McRae Rally puts so much emphasis on your single car that driving it becomes so addictive, and beating each of the 48 stages becomes the only goal in your life. All of this without racing against other cars that physically appear on the screen? Surely not...

RALLY RACING...

The two-player split-screen mode doesn't lose a hell of a lot from the one-player game, although some of the graphical detail has been toned down. However, the speed stays relatively the same, making this one of the most competitive two-player driving games we've played. Where's the link-up mode, though?

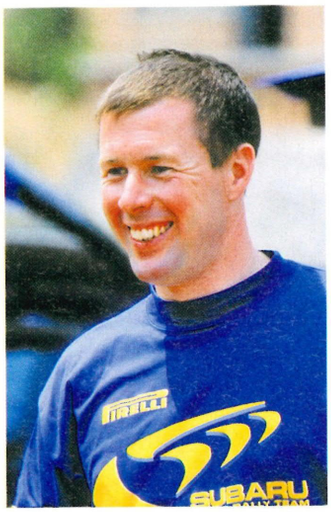




Codemasters first showed their driving game pedigree to the world with TOCA: Touring Car Championship, which, if you didn't know, took the PlayStation world by storm towards the end of last year. Coming from nowhere (on the racing game front anyway), Codemasters showed us just how fast, exciting, realistic, challenging and fun a racing game can be. That was Touring Cars, though, a motorsport that is generally jam-packed with tight racing, break-neck speed and sack-fulls of thrills and spills which are perfect for the PlayStation. Recreating the solo car experience of real rally driving doesn't lend itself to the PlayStation so easily, but Codemasters have crushed this theory, so prepare yourself for the experience that is Colin McRae Rally.

The first thing that you notice on playing Colin McRae Rally is just how similar the visuals are to the aforementioned TOCA. It's not that the games physically look the same (for a start, there's far more variety on Rally), but they do have a very similar style. This is the first clue to give away the fact that Rally is no more than an upgraded and altered TOCA engine. I'd normally start a rant about this time about how lazy this type of programming is, but when you see just how drastically it's been changed from TOCA you can see that upgrading TOCA's already-superb engine was the only sensible way to go.

Of course, to get from the road racing of TOCA to the multiple surface and environments of the rally circus, the game engine is going to have to go through some

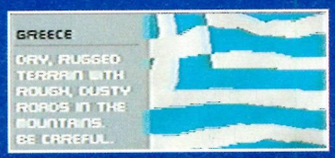


THE TRACKS



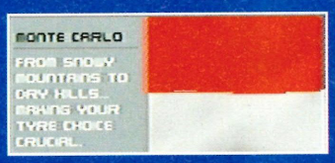
NEW ZEALAND

The new Zealand course takes you through six stages of farmland and general open areas. It's basically an introduction to the skills you rely on for the other countries, but it still presents one hell of a challenge. The road surface ranges from tarmac to gravel and mud, which should help with some of the more extreme surfaces found later in the game.



GREECE

The dusty, barren landscape of the Greek hills are the setting for this, one of the fastest rallies in the game. The track usually has a gravel surface, which is surprisingly grippy seeing as though it's so loose. The corners don't present a huge problem, although you have to work hard on the brakes because of the breakneck speeds that can be reached on some of the straighter mountain roads. You also encounter your first special stage in Greece.



MONTE CARLO

The famed Monte Carlo Rally takes place in the mountains above Monaco on a mainly tarmac-based course. However, the snow sees to it that you don't have an easy ride, as do the extremely tight hairpin corners that plague nearly every stage. This makes for a hairy ride around the mountainside that takes an age to master.



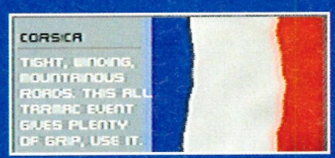
AUSTRALIA

Another fast and dusty course, but this time you have to contend with some hair-raising jumps and sweeping corners. Much of the course takes place out in the open, so instead of hitting a tree when you slide off, you just keep sliding and go into a spin. This calls for some intricate braking to avoid going miles off of the track. Australia offers some of the best thrills and spills in the game, especially on the tortuous special stage at the end of the rally.



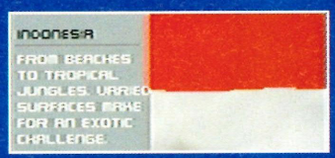
SWEDEN

The first stage of the Swedish rally takes place on a frozen lake. It's here you realise the depth of the devious minds of the track designers. Not content with giving you one of the most unforgiving stages in the game, they also go and make it on ice. Still, the rest of the Swedish rally isn't as tough, although the constant snow means you have to get into your powersliding. The night stage in the snow also makes for some interesting and perilous driving.



CORSICA

This rally takes place in the rocky hills and forests of Corsica on a mostly tarmac surface. The first stage is a snaking mountain road, but unlike the other mountain stages there's a sheer drop to the side of this one. Alas, you can't do a Louise Aitkin Walker because there's a wall to protect you. Anyway, the rest of the course is very tight with the roadside littered with trees and obstacles just waiting to flip you over on contact. Things are hotting up.



INDONESIA

This is by far the most challenging, most fun, most exhausting and most satisfying rally to complete. The surface of the ridiculously-tight course changes from sand to mud to gravel at the drop of the hat. the rainy sections are a sight to behold, and driving in the mud has never been so much fun. There are even sections that take you past quiet beaches with small fishing villages dotted around.

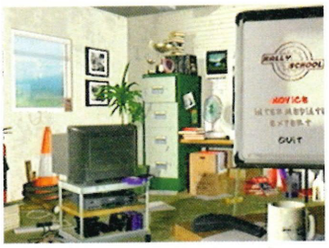


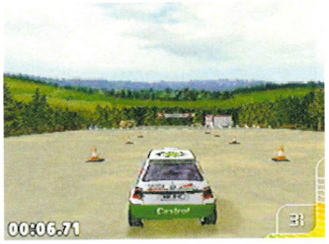
UNITED KINGDOM

Scrub the 'challenging' from my description of Indonesia and put it here, because the UK course has some of the most devious track design I've ever seen in a racing game. Like Indonesia, the track surface changes quickly so you need to alter your driving style to suit. The later stages of this rally are also some of the best looking, with high-speed jaunts through English country roads and sleepy villages.

DRIVING SCHOOL...

Before you start a championship, you may want to go to the Rally School where you can take part in practice sessions under the watchful eye of Mr McRae himself. Colin gives you tips as you make your way through the car park 'n' cone courses. Even though he has one of the most monotonous voices to grace a videogame, his advice does actually help out.





kind of Jekyll and Hyde transformation. This is exactly what Codemasters have achieved. Where TOCA is in some ways timid, Colin McRae Rally has become an evil, off-road beast of a game that wipes the floor with any of the pretenders to the rally game throne, including V-Rally. This is due to several things, but the biggest and most important aspect is the fantastic car handling physics. Codemasters have strived to get the handling as realistic as possible and although I've never driven through a bomb-hole in Indonesia or performed a powerslide around a mountain road in Corsica, I can assure you that Colin McRae Rally offers the most realistic driving engine I've ever had the pleasure of playing.

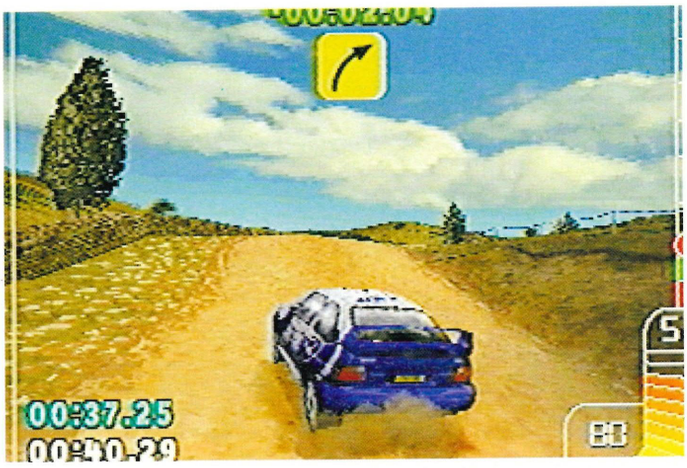
Codemasters have made it so that every single lump, rut and bump in the track effects your car in a different way, making each stage totally different from the previous, which is some achievement when Rally has over 48 of them. The cars have all been programmed to act as realistically as possible, which means no matter which of the eight cars you are driving, you find yourself going sideways most of the time. This, of course, wouldn't be realistic at all if it wasn't for the fact that rally driving is all about lurching the car sideways and performing the most astounding powerslides possible. So the basis of the game and handling is sliding, and no matter what surface you're racing on, you have to master it if you are to get anywhere. Even on the straights (of which there are few), you have to battle with the rear end of your car to stop yourself from losing control on the uneven surface that's a constant factor throughout Colin McRae Rally.

> "...The second you start driving you almost feel part of the car, and although the game is hard at first, the handling makes it as intuitive as possible..."

Hard Drivin'

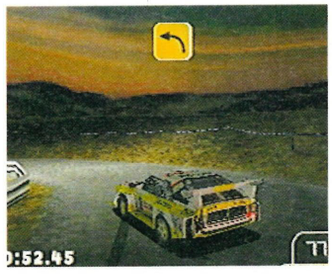
The second you start driving you almost feel part of the car, and although the game is hard at first, the realism of the handling makes learning the different manoeuvres as intuitive as possible. You find after a few hours of play you think you can take on anything thrown at you with ease, but it's not until the later courses you realise mastering Rally is easier said and done. Hairing through some of the earlier courses is a Sunday drive in the country compared to the challenge in store for you later on in the game. When you think you've got it sussed, you're thrown into a section of the most ridiculous tight bends, corners and rough terrain you've ever come across. That's until the next ridiculous set of tight bends, corners and rough terrain. The cars seem to take this type of track design in their stride, though, and watching Rally is almost as pleasurable as playing it due to the heart-stopping action that constantly takes place on screen.

Complementing the car physics, and probably just as important to Rally's ultra-realistic gameplay, is the genuinely realistic and ultimately challenging track design. The rallies take place in eight different countries, each with around six different stages. Every country offers a new type of terrain to master, and the variety in scenery really is astounding. Each stage within a country has a different feel - for instance, the United Kingdom track starts high up on a snow-covered mountain forest. As you reach Stage Two, though, the snow starts to disappear as you descend the mountain. On Stage Three you're actually off of the mountain











Don't try driving on two wheels at home, folks.



The excellent but hard-to-use head-cam view.



The replays aren't quite up to GT's standard, but they're pretty cool nonetheless.



Watch out for the shrubbery.

driving through a village and on into open fields and the back gardens of the rich. This type of progressive stage design keeps you interested at all times, and really adds to that 'just one more go' factor.

A lot of effort has gone into making the visual side of the tracks and environment as realistic looking as possible. Everything from JCBs, houses and caravans, to logs, spectators and trees line the tracks. Even the open stages with nothing but desert and fields are made interesting the inclusion of stupid, death-defying jumps or bomb holes. What I'm trying to say is that you're never going to be bored when playing Colin McRae Rally.

Scalextric!?

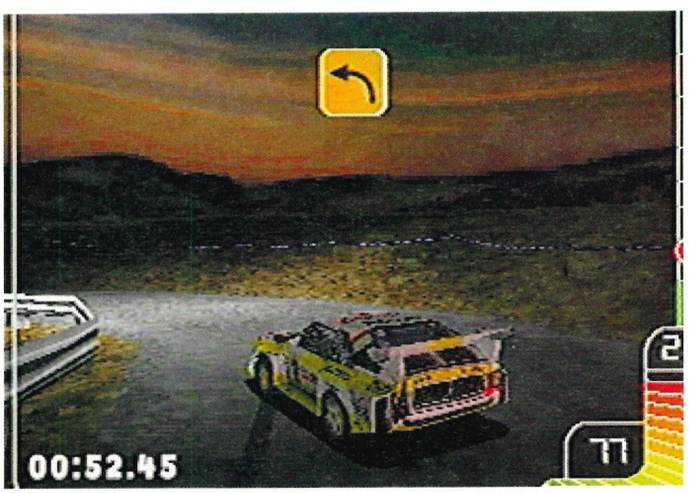
You don't get to see everything that Colin McRae Rally holds in store until you have earned the right. At first there are only four cars to choose from and one rally to race. To progress you have to place in the top six of the New Zealand rally, which in itself takes some doing. As you beat each different rally, it becomes available to race as a single competition or in the time trial mode. This gives you opportunity to practice the different styles of terrain and course, and hopefully get a better placing when you go back to the championship.

Don't expect to open up all of the courses in the first few days of play, because Colin McRae Rally is ridiculously tough. As I've already mentioned, each new stage requires a different driving skill so you're constantly forced to learn new techniques. The game is also made harder because of the way that the tracks are made up. Instead of having a Scalextric-style track design (á là V-Rally), where there are only a certain amount of corners and track parts, the courses on Colin McRae have all been drawn separately, so you have to learn more than just a few types of corner. You're helped by on-screen prompts for upcoming corners and Colin McRae's real-life co-pilot, Nicky Grist, who is constantly shouting out details of the terrain ahead. As well as being a massive help, this also adds to the realism aspect which is already very prominent in Colin McRae Rally. The various other sound effects are no less realistic either. The different engines offer a wide variation in noise and at times you can even hear the gearbox whirring, which is a nice touch. The various other skidding, weather and driving-your-car-through-a-tree effects finish off a symphony of rally noises that give the game its final touch of realism.

Wedding Bells

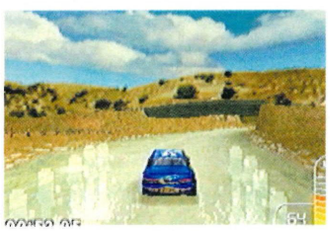
Of course, realism in a game isn't everything. In fact, too much realism can be the downfall of many a game. Thankfully, though, Codemasters have managed to marry a ridiculous amount of rally realism with arguably the best racing gameplay ever. Okay, Gran Turismo may be the ultimate driving game, and with over 200 different cars and a plethora of competitions you can't really argue the point. Colin McRae Rally, however, manages to be just as playable and long-lasting as Gran Turismo, but

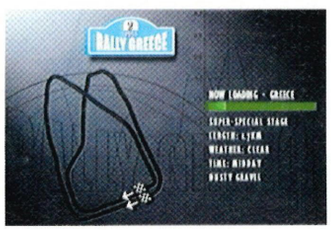
"...Realism isn't everything. In fact, too much realism can be the downfall of a game. Thankfully, Codemasters offer the best racing gameplay ever..."

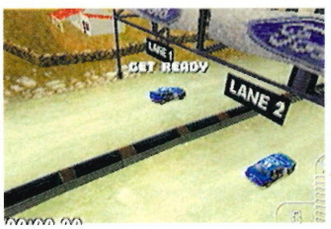


SUPER SPECIAL STAGE...

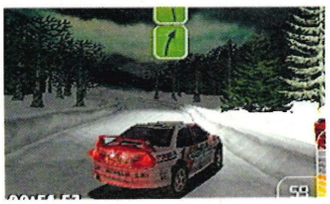
These stages take place on an actual circuit where you race against one other opponent. However, to avoid accidents, each car drives in separate lanes which cross over each other to give both contestants a go on the inside and outside route. These stages make excellent viewing in real life, but this excitement doesn't port too well to the PlayStation, although the inclusion is a worthwhile diversion.





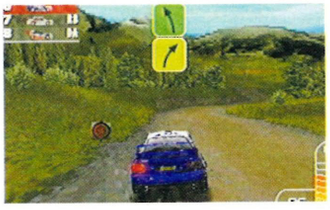


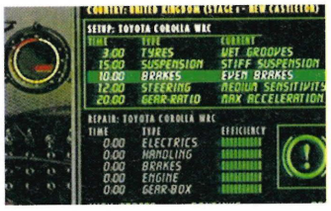




CALL THE RAC...

The damage factor plays an important part in Colin McRae Rally, although many of the damaged areas don't make a difference to the handling of your car. You get the chance to set up and repair your car every two or three stages in a rally, but you must prioritise the adjustments you make because you only have a virtual hour to make them. For instance, if you want to change your tyres it takes three minutes out of your available 60, but to repair a gearbox may take over half of it. The actual repair and set-up screen is very quick and easy to use, and it's also got some cool sound effects to boot.





for different reasons.

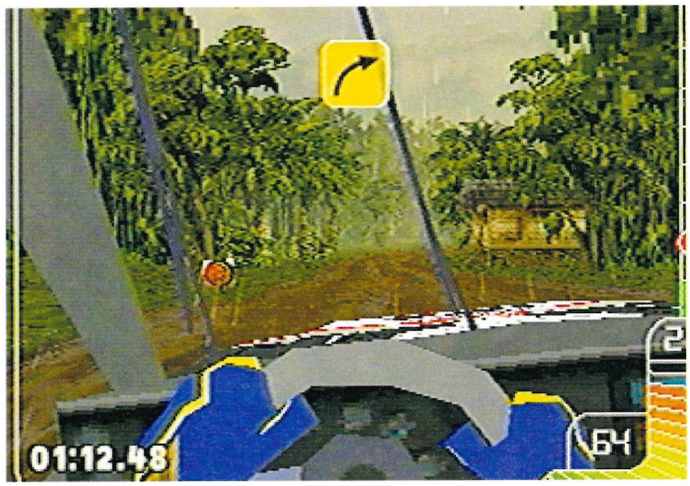
Of course, the real comparison shouldn't be made with Gran Turismo, it should be made with V-Rally, the PlayStation's current top rally game. And although V-Rally is an excellent arcade rally offering, it has nothing on Colin McRae's realism and variety. Colin McRae out-does V-Rally in just about every area. V-Rally is still great, but Colin McRae Rally is greater. In fact, the games are quite different, so even if you own V-Rally, Colin McRae Rally is still an essential buy.

The sheer variety of driving terrain gives the game massive longevity - in fact, you can actually drive for over two hours without seeing the same piece of track twice. This wouldn't be a feat of programming excellence if it wasn't for the fact that every stage and every course is as exciting as it is challenging and as brilliantly drawn as it is fast. Even if the car physics and handling weren't as realistic as they are, Colin McRae Rally would be one of the best driving games around. As it stands, though, Colin McRae offers realism of levels never seen before.

If I were to find fault in Colin McRae Rally, it would be that close up, much of the scenery becomes pixelated, but this problem is evident on nearly every PlayStation game. Besides, it only ever happens when you crash; the rest of the time the scenery flies past at breakneck speed looking as good as Anna Kournikova in the buff.

Colin McRae Rally defies all theory and offers one of the best driving games even when there's no other cars to physically race. This could easily have been disastrous, but against the odds, Codemasters have put together a tremendous, serious rally driving package that never fails to entertain, challenge or thrill the player. Just make sure it's on your 'wants' list this summer.

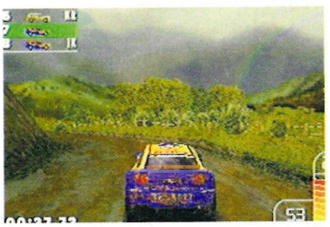
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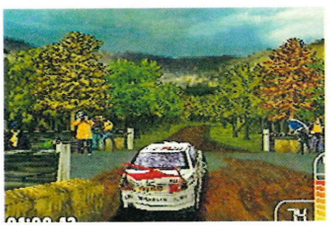




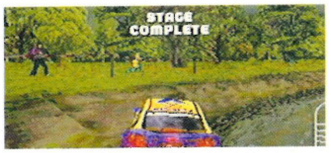
Whoops.







"...V-Rally is still great, but Colin McRae Rally is even greater. In fact, the games are so different even if you own V-Rally, Colin McRae is still an essential buy..."



Second Opinion

What a superb game. With no other cars on the track, Colin McRae Rally forces you to focus on sheer speed and stage times. Presentation is superb, with crystal-clear options and great aesthetics, and the gameplay is spot-on. Nice one, Codemasters!

Ian

The Score

Publisher	CODEMASTERS
Developer	CODEMASTERS
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	RACING
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔
Dual Shock Analogue	✔
Steering Wheel	✔

GAMEPLAY
10

ORIGINALITY
9

LIFESPAN
8

SOUND
9

GRAPHICS
9

OVERALL
95%

in summary

The definitive rally driving game.



Batman & Robin

The caped crusader has joined together with his two sidekicks to rid Gotham City of villainous scum once more - and this time he's doing it Tomb Raider-style! With a frothy combination of driving and action, can Acclaim's Batman & Robin cut the mustard?

Gotham City Post

EST 1912 THE PEOPLE'S PAPER LATE ISSUE 30¢

MR FREEZE FOILED

BATMAN SAVES SUDAN DIAMOND

Life was peaceful in Wayne Manor. There hadn't been any crime for ages, and Bruce Wayne and his friend Dick Grayson seemed to spend more time attending functions with the rich and famous than donning their costumes and masks to prance around the streets at night. But things were about to change...

Alfred the butler's niece came to visit her ailing uncle, swishing her blonde hair enticingly at Dick and poking her nose into places she shouldn't. It wasn't long before she discovered the deep, dark secrets of Wayne Manor, but instead of going to the police, she gets a rubber suit all of her own! What a strange house Wayne Manor must be.

Strangely, with Batgirl on the scene Gotham is plagued once more with crime. There's a deadly ice man on the loose going by the name of Mr Freeze, and together with an eco-terrorist called Poison Ivy they're wreaking havoc on the city, and plan to put Gotham into a permanent Ice Age. Can Batman and the gang stop them? Well, that's now down to you with this 3D adventure from Probe and Acclaim.

Batman & Robin is split into three days, with different parts of Gotham City accessible on each day. Day One is based around jewellery shops, with Mr Freeze collecting diamonds for his cryosuit, Day Two features the Ice Rink, Gotham Water works and the Blossom St. Baths where you can to fight with Poison Ivy and Day Three takes you to computer shops around the city, ending up in the observatory for a showdown with Freeze.

Toys For The Boys...

You can't simply play the 20 levels in any order - there are roadblocks placed around the map to stop you. To move from level to level, each superhero has their own vehicle stored in the Batcave - Batman has the famous Batmobile, Robin a Redbird motorcycle and Batgirl her own mean motorbike. These are swapped for ice vehicles in Day Three, when Mr Freeze covers Gotham in ice. You can take any of the three superheroes to play a level, swapping them around at the Batcave. Each has his own strengths and weaknesses that could make all the difference when playing the next level. Batman is quite large so has trouble jumping big gaps, where Robin is nimble and can leap around with ease. Batgirl is a force to be reckoned with against Poison Ivy, as she's a girl and therefore immune to the pheromone dust Ivy likes to use - the two boys are helpless when exposed to this deadly dust!



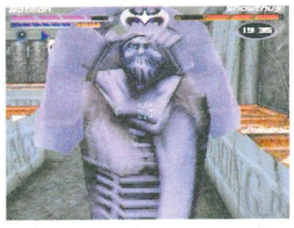










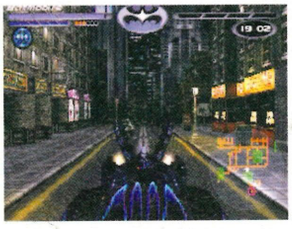


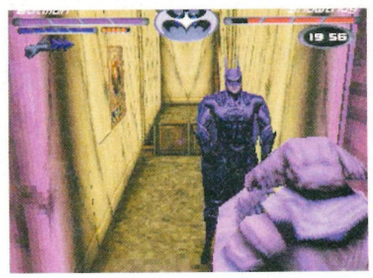












MEET THE CHARACTERS

The Good Guys



Batman
Bruce Wayne inherited the lavish Wayne Manor when his parents were killed in a mugging on the streets of Gotham City. Their deaths didn't have a good effect on young Bruce's mind; he stalks the streets of Gotham at night searching for criminals and righting wrongs. Underneath the manor is a secret Batcave packed full of the latest electronic gadgetry. The only person who shared Bruce's secret was the trusty butler Alfred. Until the arrival of...



Robin
After years of fighting crime alone, Batman took on a sidekick in the shape of Dick Grayson, nicknamed Robin, when he came to stay in Wayne Manor when he was orphaned. Bruce can identify with Dick's loss of his parents and between them they make a crime-fighting force to be reckoned with. There's nothing like a girl to cause trouble between two friends, and things certainly hot up at Wayne Manor with the arrival of...



Batgirl
Alfred's niece came to visit when the butler was very sick in bed and close to death's door. While staying at the manor, she stumbled on the secret Batcave and a special rubber suit Alfred had made for her. She now joins to dynamic duo in the fight against Mr Freeze and Poison Ivy, bringing with her a mean left kick and good looks to match!

The Bad Guys



Mr Freeze
Once a brilliant scientist, Mr Freeze's mind was warped with the death of his beautiful wife from a rare disease - the same disease he was researching. Instead of putting her to rest, he had her cryogenically frozen so he could continue his research and bring her back to life. This takes endless amounts of money, though, so he turned to crime to keep his research going.



Poison Ivy
Ivy was also a scientist, and expert in botany, until her colleague Dr Woodrue savagely murdered her when she discovered he was creating an army of super soldiers in the next lab! The plants she loved so dearly saved her from extinction though, filling her with her own super-powers.



Frosty
Mr Freeze's right-hand man, Frosty is nothing but an overgrown thug with a large ice gun. He has no real supervillian abilities, but a blast from his gun certainly stops your game in its tracks.



Bane
Bane is Dr Woodrue's creation, a super soldier with the power of a hundred men! He is the toughest character in the game, beating even Mr Freeze when it comes down to brute strength. He takes up the role of Poison Ivy's muscle power. With her brilliant mind and his brawn, they make a great couple.

There are set levels that must be played at the correct time, like the museum that starts the game off. In these cases the game pushes the player in the right direction with hints that flash up on the screen. Other levels can pretty much be played in any order you wish. As the heroes move around the city they pick up clues which are stored in the Bat-computer back at the Batcave. When these clues are deciphered they lead the way to the next level where one of the game's arch villains is busy carrying out another devilish plan.

Once you've worked out where the next crime is going to be committed and roughly the time you should be there, you can get going and use the Gotham City tourist map to point yourself in the right direction. There are three ways you can enter each level - before the criminals have arrived where everything is quiet and peaceful, during a robbery where Mr Freeze's henchmen are on alert to stop you reaching him, or after the event when the crime has been committed and all you can do is search for clues they may have left behind.

As you know, the key to success is in finding clues. Some of these can be found simply lying around on the streets of Gotham City or the floor inside levels, but many others are gained by fighting with the henchmen that litter each stage. By kicking or punching them into submission, a clue is sometimes left behind. All you then have to do is walk into it to pick it up.

Fighting force

As fighting is an important part of Batman & Robin, it pays to spend some time practising the moves for your character. Each superhero has a number of special moves they can perform, from backflips to roundhouse kicks. You learn about these by picking up karate leaflets from the streets and analysing them with the Bat-computer. E-mails from Alfred the butler often give away basic information too - you've got to keep your eyes and ears open to learn everything there is to know about your chosen character.

> **"...No matter which character you choose, they all seem like they have lead boots on as they clank around the scenery..."**

There are three agility levels for each character too, which can be enhanced by picking up special power-ups from thugs and acrobats in the streets. These are about the only people you find wandering around Gotham City - everything is set at night, you see. You wouldn't get Bruce Wayne exposing himself as Batman in daylight!

Who are you?

You can't help but notice the similarities between the graphics and gameplay in Batman & Robin and Lara Croft's antics in the Tomb Raider series. The same 'behind the character' perspective, the same swooping camera angles and levels containing secrets and puzzles. The main difference is the Tomb Raider games are finely-tuned masterpieces where you learn instinctively how to control Lara's fluid movements, but Batman & Robin controls like a duck in a washing machine.

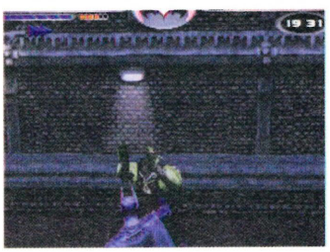
No matter which character you choose to play, they all seem like they have lead boots on (it could be part of their costume) as they clank their way around the scenery. To make matters worse, to turn around they all spin on the spot like dummies, without moving their legs, and when they walk into a wall they continue walking on the spot - classic bad programming! These points really drag the game down.

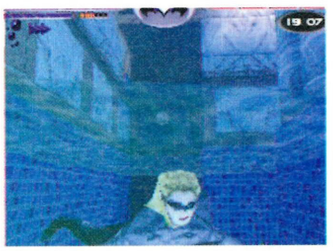
Add to this the fact that many of the levels are based around the same theme, with similar layouts and contents, and you've got a problematic game. Day One, for example, has four jewellery shops to explore - they all have the same cabinets and alarm systems, so don't tax your gameplaying skills too much. Day Three repeats this process with three computer shops to visit, again with similar scenery but this time with almost identical layouts too. This stinks of laziness on the part of the game's developers, or perhaps a game that has been rushed out. After all, it's been a long time since Batman & Robin was in the cinema!

Don't get me wrong; there is some enjoyment to be had from playing Batman & Robin, as long as you ignore the imperfections I've mentioned. The puzzles are quite taxing in places, and the battles with Mr Freeze, Poison Ivy, Bane and all the other cronies keep the most hardened beat-'em-up fan going for a long time. It just could have been so much better with a bit of solid playtesting.

DOUG EPM









Second Opinion

Batman & Robin is a brave attempt at doing something different, but the execution is not as strong as it could be. It's fun and exciting, but could be better. Here's to an improved sequel...

Ian

The Score

Publisher	ACCLAIM
Developer	PROBE
Released	AUGUST '98
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	ACTION ADVENTURE
Players	1
Memory Card	✓

GAMEPLAY
6

ORIGINALITY
5

LIFESPAN
7

SOUND
8

GRAPHICS
8

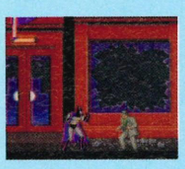
OVERALL
70%

in summary

Bad programming and a lack of originality almost drag Batman & Robin into the depths of bad game city!

BATMAN IN PIXELS

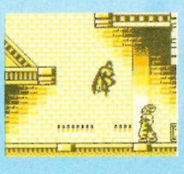
So you think this is the first outing for Batman in the world of videogames, do you? Well think again! The caped crusader has been knocking around on computers and consoles for years now. Here's a selection of the more playable games...



Adventures of Batman & Robin
Super Nintendo



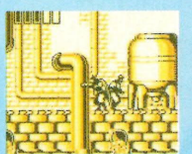
Batman Forever
Super Nintendo



Batman The Animated Series
GameBoy

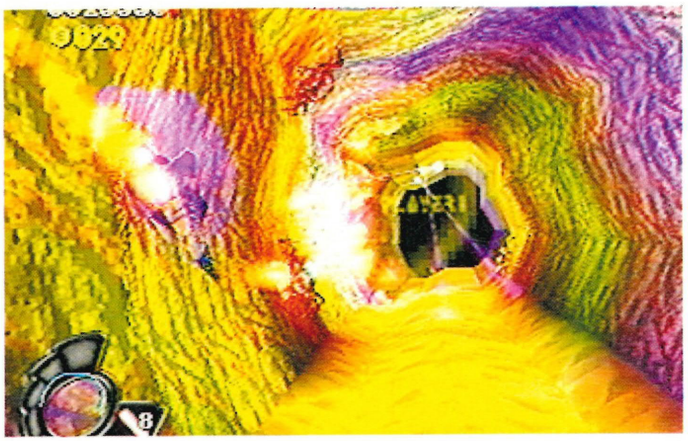


Batman Forever
GameBoy



Batman Return of the Joker
GameBoy

N2O





Gremlin promise a stand-up fight, but it's just another bug hunt...

With a lineage that stretches back to the first ever graphical computer game (Space War, 1962, trivia heads) the shoot-'em-up is the oldest genre of computer game, and to an extent all games are descended from the same button-bashing ancestry. For years simple games like Space Invaders, Defender and Galaxians transfixed untold spare change-crazy millions for hundreds of hours, the straightforward visuals and unsophisticated sound effects not impinging on the enjoyment created. Nowadays, though the goalposts have moved, and graphics must be as flash and spectacular as possible or the games-buying public sneers with contempt.

For the shoot-'em-up, this has naturally led to big and complex enemies (like those in Einhänder, reviewed last ish) or super-slick polygonal environments and targets (eg. Ocean's no-trousers Viper). Gameplay is to an extent dictated by the effects on screen, and especially in the case of the latter, the restrictions these pose in themselves. As our shoot-'em-up feature in Issue Five ironically shows, though, often the stupidest-looking games are actually the most enjoyable to play, as they are unencumbered by an unhealthy obsession with eye-candy.

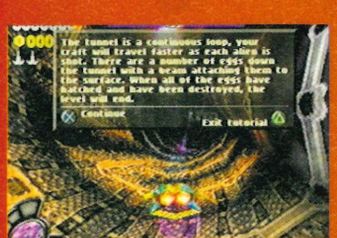
N2O, then, is an out-and-out shoot-'em-up that follows similar themes to The Best Shoot-'Em-Up Ever (for my hotly-disputed money) Tempest X, in as much as it's a tubular psychedelic storm of relentless swarming enemies and frantic bullet pumping. You control one of five craft that must navigate a maze of looping tunnels infested with a whole hive-full of alien insectoids. Unsurprisingly, they're all out for your hide. As the screenshots more than hint at, these elongated caverns are awash with rippling colour cycling and brainiac trip-out textures that spangle and confuse the eye marvellously, constantly shifting and gallivanting about the spectrum. With the PlayStation's current favour among the more chemically-liberated areas of society, this is an understandable tack to take, and for sure N2O is a treat for any observer's jaded eyeballs. However, to play it is an awful lot less fun than just sitting back and watching the fireworks. How and why did this happen? Read on for the answer, kids...

Retina Jangle

The trouble is that Gremlin have outdone themselves as such. While the abovementioned colourific caverns are undeniably sublime, piled top of these are the encroaching baddies who are multi-limbed bugs, scorpions and similar that scuttle up from the depths hopefully into your line of fire. They're all nicely drawn and animated, coming in a huge variety of shapes and sizes (including a novel fire-breathing ladybird). Picking up the bonus-boosting coins they disgorge upon demise creates a glitterball explosion of stars, dying insects go 'pop' with bright fragmentary detonations, extra weapons swirl and bounce all over the shop, etc. On paper, all this sounds pretty cool, and is even reminiscent of the chaotic max-out at the height of the action in Tempest X3, but to play it just becomes a bit of a perplexing nightmare that obscures what you need to be keeping close tabs on. Unlike TX3 (where it's still possible to keep track when all hell is breaking loose) the various cumulative visual effects in N2O don't cunningly disorientate and confuse but merely conceal the important bits under and load of graphical noise. I know the difference between one and the other may be a touch hard to grasp, but again in actuality it's a lot clearer to experience.

With the undulating path of the tunnel and its rapid rotation slaved to the ship (which admittedly can be disabled), even the simplest levels get to be just whirls of stuff with your ship at one end pumping away without distinction. Straight away this lessens the feeling of being hunted by a remorseless and inevitable enemy (which Space Invaders, say, had in droves) as the atmosphere it fosters is more akin to a detached extermination that periodically is interrupted by a surprise disaster. Losing a life is thus not emotionally involving, and usually provokes just a shrug of the shoulders rather than impassioned ejaculations of pain and profound self-loathing. As Darren pointed out in an uncharacteristic moment of lucidity and coherence, "There's no point in playing it". A bit over-harsh perhaps, but exemplary of how N2O lacks that ever-so-simple to see, but

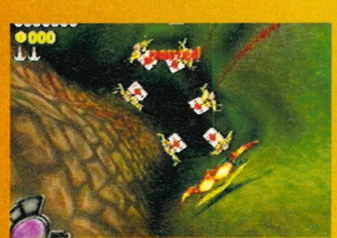
SWEET FEATURES



An idiot-proof guide is provided on how to get a high score. Useful, but a bit limited, and it does show up the slightly creaky basic gameplay.



The three-tone paint job on your craft can be re-jigged using a colour wheel that lets you re-spray the ship in lurid styles.



You can also choose a custom skin pattern to complement the colours. In the game it's virtually impossible to see, but who cares?



Hitting Pause freezes the action, but instead of a static screen, it goes wibbly wobbly, warping like a blob of medicated jelly.





tricky to attain tang of playability that pumps the heart of even the most rudimentary-looking classic shoot-'em-up.

Kaleidoscopic Smears

All this is made all the more tragic because the game is stuffed full with the kind of thoughtful and genuine design touches which raise a game's stature above the madding crowd of most other titles. The front end is honestly superb, being a lovingly put together set of rotational anti-menus cloaked in kaleidoscopic paint smears and pulsating geometric patterns, a hundred miles away from the workmanlike presentation screens we see day in, day out. Chilly-cool Designer's Republic-inspired iconic art also takes things up a notch in the after-club cred stakes, while the wealth of user-definable options available are actually quite original and surprising (see boxout) and, unusually for a shoot-'em-up, there's a tutorial mode that walks you through a sample level and explains the somewhat over-complicated dynamics of points scoring and power-up attainment. The musical accompaniment is also above and beyond the call of duty, as it is virtually an entire album of acid-scarred breakbeatery from The Crystal Method which slots in perfectly with the bug-out visuals. However, the actual in-game sound FX are terribly puny and wet, the sound of your main gun in particular being an over-polite and muffled 'boum' that doesn't get the vital juices a-flowing. Perhaps the belief was that the rip-roaring soundtrack would be compromised by kick-arse sound FX, and so this could be deliberate, but somehow I doubt it. This is another reason why N2O's shoot-'em-up balls aren't big enough, as anyone knows the sonics in a game of this genre are almost as vital as the graphics in creating the right kind of hectic atmosphere.

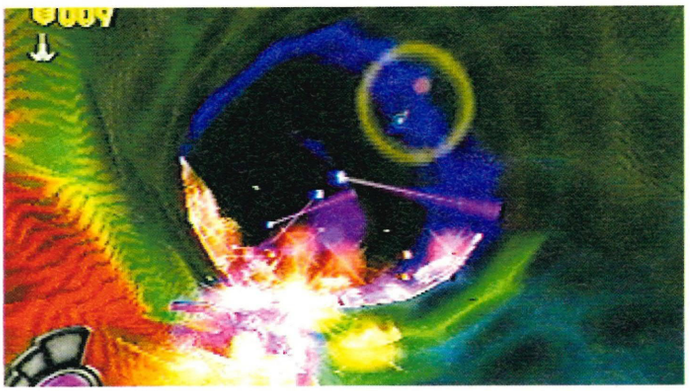
Critical Mass

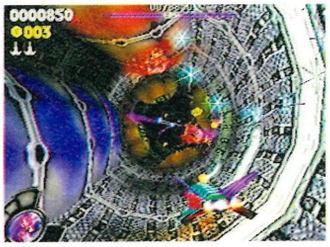
All this criticism was painful to write as I was really looking forward to N2O. It seemed the ideal oasis amongst a desert of unambitious PSX thumb candy games, but it was not to be. The spark of gameplay that should trigger obsessive compulsive behaviour is sadly not there, but it was oh so very close to hitting the nail squarely on the head; it certainly wasn't for a lack of trying and expertise. A pretty pity all round, alas.

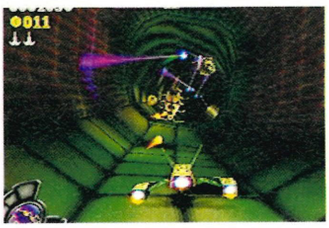
CHRISTIAN EPM











As you can see, N2O is without doubt an extremely pyrotechnical game.



Second Opinion

I'm not too keen on this one. Sure it's colourful, fast and features excellent music, but it's so boring. Every level's like the last one; you get sick of it long before you lose your last life.

Ian

The Score

Publisher	GREMLIN
Developer	GREMLIN
Released	TBA
Version	UK
Price	£X
Genre	SHOOT-'EM-UP
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔
Analogue	✔
Password	✔

GAMEPLAY
5

ORIGINALITY
7

LIFESPAN
4

SOUND
6

GRAPHICS
8

OVERALL
60%

in summary

A flawed beauty, but it means well.

War Games

War is not a game (except here)...

WarGames is a curious licence for a video game. The film is 15 years old, and although it enjoys a cult following, it's showing its age in terms of the technology it portrays. Developers Interactive Studios tackled this problem by setting the game 20 years after the film and came up with a plot owing more to Terminator 2 than the WarGames movie. Thus the programmers weren't restricted by the game's celluloid inspiration, the game won't tie so closely to the film that anyone who hated the movie won't touch it but those with fond memories of David Lightman's schoolboy hacking capers will cast an inquisitive eye in the game's direction. Perhaps the licence was a smarter marketing move than it looks.

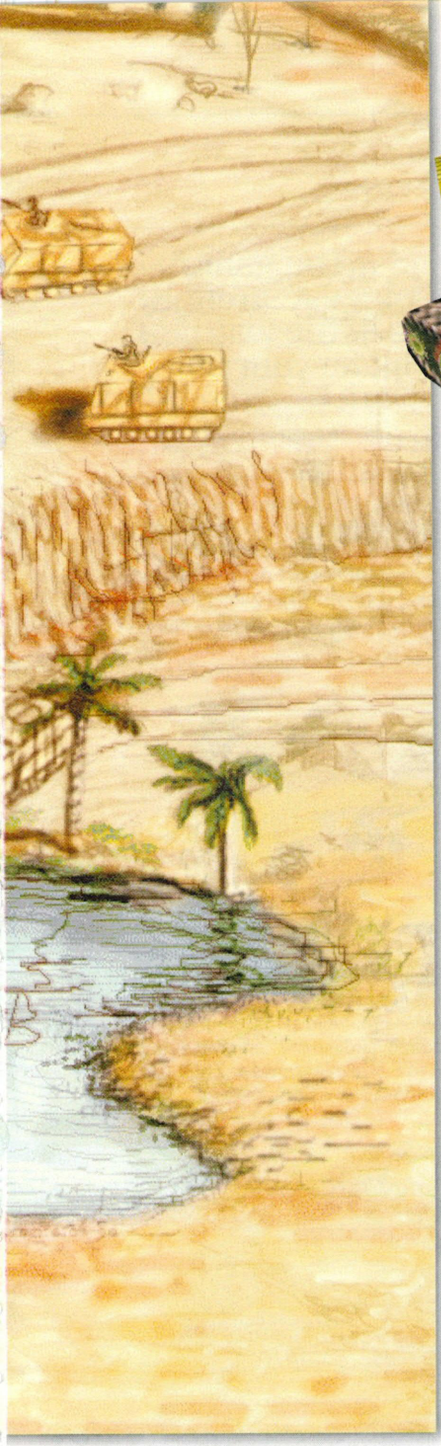
Let's be brief with the plot. After the Government computer WOPR and schoolboy hacker David Lightman came close to accidentally starting World War III, the machine was taken off-line and used as a training device. on leaving school, Lightman is employed to develop and upgrade WOPR (War Operation Programmed Response, if you're interested), which he does with a great deal of success. Then he made a fatal error in connecting WOPR to the Internet, allowing people to compete with it on-line. Due to his advanced programming, the machine had become almost sentient; it quickly realised humans could turn it off whenever they liked. To avoid this, WOPR made illicit stock market deals, earning money which it converted into hard war machinery by buying over the net. When ready, it strikes key NORAD (North American Defence) positions in its quest for global domination...

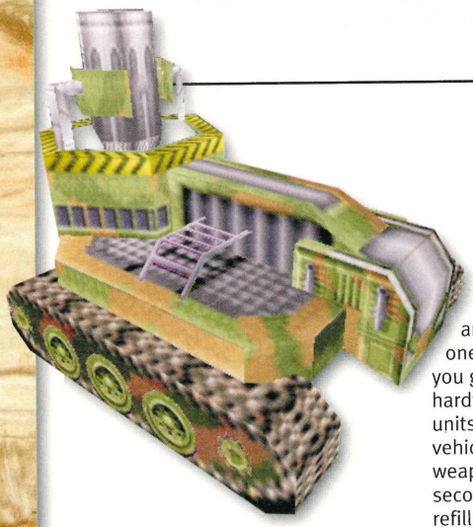


A Call to Arms...

Okay, so the plot's a little silly, but don't knock it - it works. In gameplay terms, it sets the scene for a series of skirmishes in several theatre of operations scattered across the globe. You can play as the NORAD (human) forces, desperately trying to hold back the massed armies of the rogue computer, or as the WOPR (robotic)

"...Even when you've completed the NORAD missions, the WOPR ones still offer a challenge; you don't feel you're playing the same game twice..."





units, taking out key human installations and becoming their masters instead of their slaves. There are 15 missions in each campaign, offering 30 in total, as well as the multiplayer mayhem outlined elsewhere.

You start each mission with a handful of units from the 15 or so available to each side. You've no control over what you get - that's decided for you. Your input comes from using their individual strengths and weaknesses to complete a series of mission objectives, culminating in the final, overall task which completes the level and opens up the next.

Units Unite and Untie

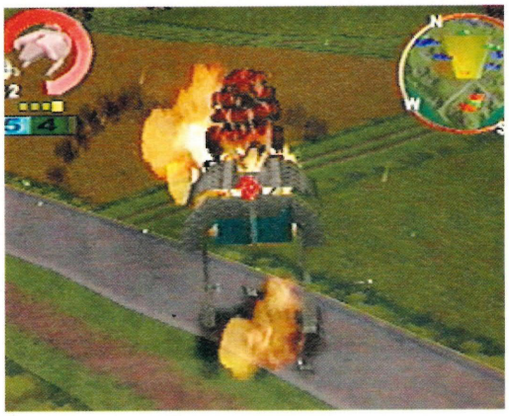
The early levels see you controlling a mere three units, and these are straightforward ones such as tanks or jeeps. Later you get all manner of military hardware, including air and sea units as well as the usual land vehicles. Each has a primary weapon with infinite ammo and a secondary one which you have to refill when empty. You can access the mission briefing at any time, just in case you forget what you're supposed to be doing. On the action screen, check out the on-screen map and follow the waypoint indicator to your destination, which is circled so you can't miss it.

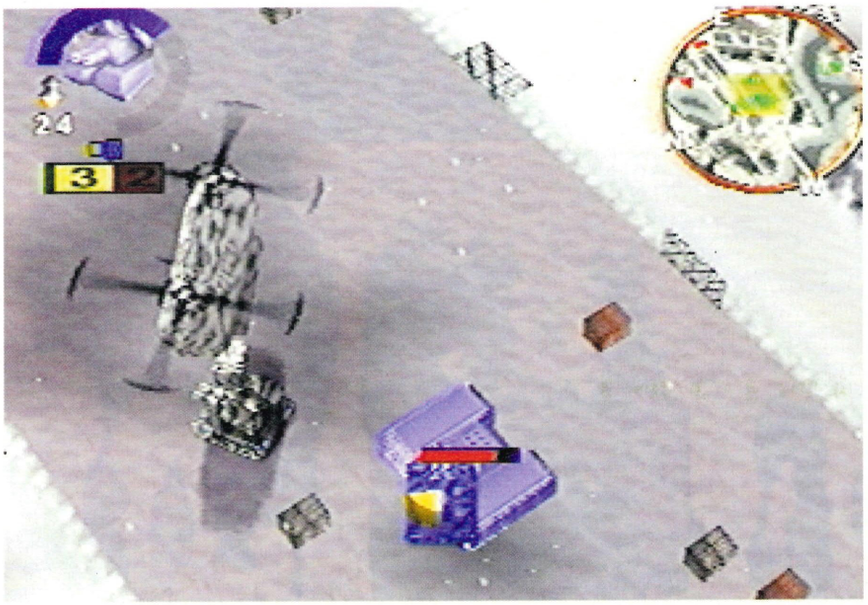
The game's biggest strength is in the way you make your units work together. You can switch between vehicles at will, and from the unit under your command, you can call any or all of the rest to join your battle. The adept can thus split their forces, sending some units one way and the rest another. It's tricky at first, but a worthwhile skill to practice. The AI on your computer-controlled vehicles is set just right. It works well enough to be an asset, but not so well you feel the PSX is playing the game for you. For example, units travelling a great distance to join you might get stuck in the terrain, taking a direct route instead of circumventing a river or mountain. If this happens, it's up to you to put them right.

> "...The AI on your computer-controlled vehicles is set just right. It works well enough to be an asset, but not so well you feel the PSX is playing the game for you..."

The player is better placed to match the unit to its adversary, matching your strengths to the enemy's weaknesses. Charging in and trashing every foe in sight works only for the first couple of missions - after that, it's a fatal stratagem. For example, attacking heavily-armed installations or mobile artillery with a jeep (or its WOPR equivalent, a tri-bike) is suicidal. These are fast reconnaissance vehicle which can plough through infantry and also drop marker flares to position airstrikes (which they can then









▲ Replenish armour and ammo by calling in airdrops.



summon), but have little armour or firepower.

Likewise, never use aerial units against a building guarded by SAM sites - take out the missile launchers with ground units first. Like its stablemate and (to some degree) inspiration Nuclear Strike, clever positioning is required to avoid getting caught in crossfire, something else the player can do better than the PSX.

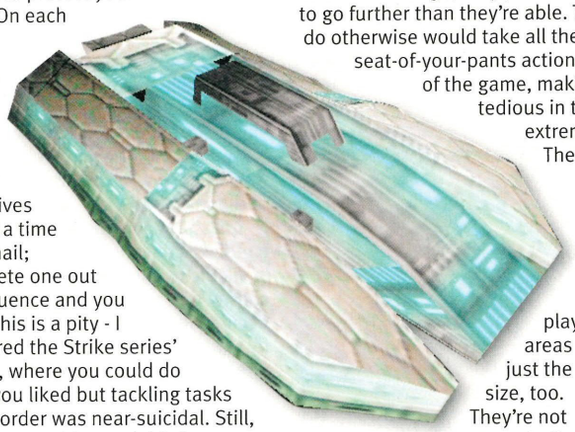
Management of Resources

You won't get far without managing your resources, either. Controlling a vehicle until it's blown to pieces then switching to another is not a wise tactic. Instead, hold back a badly damaged unit until you can secure an area with a flashing building, enabling you to hack the enemy's computer and summon air supplies. This is no free lunch, however. The unit doing the hacking is vulnerable while breaking into the system. Also, the game's DEFCON (Defence Condition) rating, which starts at five, decreases throughout the game. As it falls, the foes get more aggressive and if it reaches 'one', you suffer airstrikes. Trashing a foe increases the rating, encouraging fast, aggressive play.

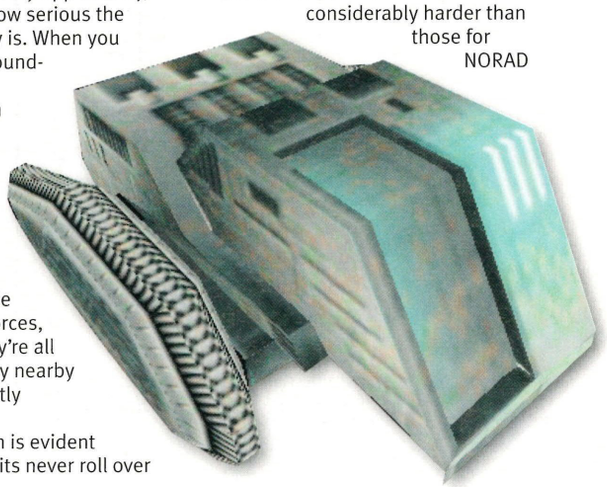
The tasks in hand are quite varied, including trashing all enemy units in a given location, ferrying scientists to a command centre to investigate its files and then to the airport to escape and securing, crossing and then destroying a bridge to protect your base. On each level you're given your objectives one at a time by e-mail; complete one out of sequence and you lose. This is a pity - I preferred the Strike series' model, where you could do what you liked but tackling tasks out of order was near-suicidal. Still, with a game this good this is a minor criticism. A little more serious are the over-enthusiastic sound-bytes peppered throughout the game. Phrases like "We're under heavy fire" and "Situation critical" are offered at every opportunity, regardless of how serious the trouble actually is. When you realise these sound-bytes are more decorative than useful they cease to get in your way, but first time you're told you're under 'heavy fire' you panic and toggle through your forces, only to find they're all dealing with any nearby enemies perfectly satisfactorily.

Clever design is evident throughout. Units never roll over or fall off a cliff if you take them too close to the edge; they just refuse to go further than they're able. To do otherwise would take all the seat-of-your-pants action out of the game, making it tedious in the extreme. The playing areas are just the right size, too. They're not cramped - there's plenty to get your teeth into, but they're not large and sprawling either. You're never far from the action, and moving your forces from A to B rarely becomes tedious. Also, the WOPR missions are considerably harder than those for NORAD

"...The game's biggest strength is in the way you make your units work together..."







POWER PICK-UPS

These are the vehicle-enhancing pick-ups you find during the game:

WEAPON ADRENALIN
Increases the power of a unit's primary weapon. While in effect, your unit glows yellow.



SHIELD
Pick this up and your unit glows green, indicating a second shield. This diminishes with time and enemy fire.



SECONDARY WEAPON RELOAD
Boosts the ammo supply of your secondary weapon. Needless to say, this can never exceed the maximum.



REPAIR DAMAGE
Repairs a portion of your lost armour. The amount of armour regained depends on the strength of the unit that dropped it.

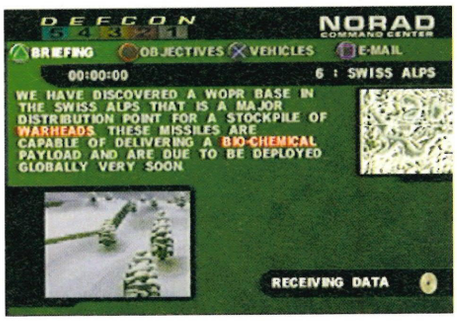


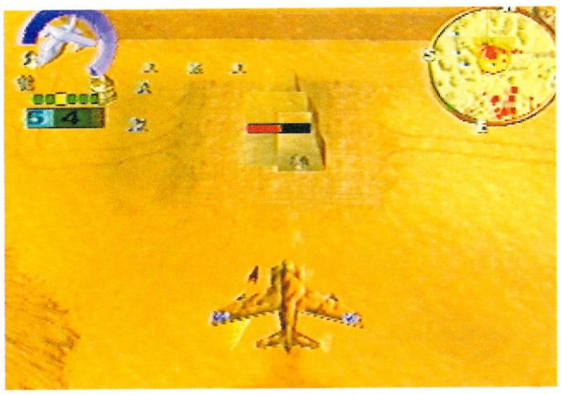


and their units (sci-fi walkers, hover tanks and drones rather than NORAD's familiar military fare) behave significantly differently too. Thus even when you've completed the NORAD missions, the WOPR ones still offer a challenge; you don't feel you're playing the same game twice.

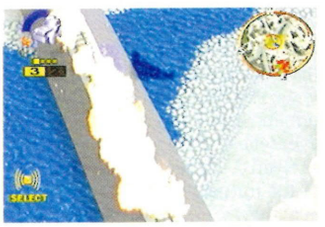
It's not often I get this excited about a game, but WarGames' perfect mix of strategy and action has got me hooked. It's brilliantly executed, the camera operating so smoothly you hardly notice it's there, and the learning curve is superb, allowing you to learn the ropes and then really making you work. All in all, it's hit - buy it! Now if you'll excuse me, I've a heavily-defended WOPR fortification to trash...

IAN EPM











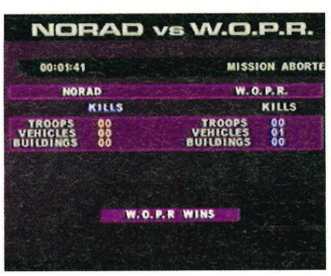
MULTIPLAYER MADNESS

There are several multiplayer options offered by WarGames. You can play a Deathmatch, or tackle the NORAD or WOPR missions co-operatively, both players battling to achieve the mission's objectives. The Deathmatch offers three separate scenarios. The straightforward Deathmatch game sees you battling your buddy to the bitter end, the last man standing being the winner. Play a Deathmatch Regeneration game and destroyed units reappear at the player's home base. This feud only ends when one of the protagonists quits, the debriefing screen outlining kills and offering the winner. The aim of the Capture the Flare outing is to steal a flare from your opponent's base and take it to your own. Of course, he's after the flare on your base too...

As with the one-player game, you control one unit at a time and can call the others or separate your team if you wish. The terrains are those used for the one-player outing, though you choose your Deathmatch arenas.

Although there's no link-up mode, the split screen is particularly clear, using a diagonal break and including individual maps. The multiplayer game is a fine addition to the main missions, and adds a great deal of lastability.







Second Opinion

Cool. A tremendous mix of Mass Destruction's arcade blasting and Soviet Strike's cerebral shooting. The game's main strength is its AI - computer-controlled units are good, but tend to get into trouble if you neglect 'em. You always feel in control.

Alan

The Score

Publisher	ELECTRONIC ARTS
Developer	INTERACTIVE STUDIOS
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	STRATEGY
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔
Analogue/Dual Shock	✔

GAMEPLAY
9

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
8

SOUND
7

GRAPHICS
7

OVERALL
93%

in summary

An amazing arcade/strategy hybrid wich no home should be without.

Road Rash 3D



It's the wheel thing...

With miles of interconnected roads and four deadly gangs with strange outfits and nasty weapons with which to smash their enemies heads in it could only be France '98 and the farce that was the World Cup. Or, alternatively, it could be that Road Rash has been resurrected from the land of 16-bit consoles - and what a blast it is!

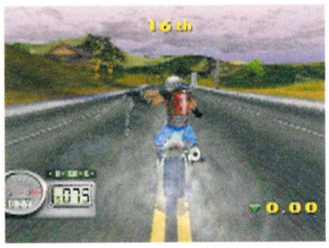
It's been a long time since Road Rash made its first appearance, way back in the days of the Sega Mega Drive and Super Nintendo. It was hailed as a masterpiece for its fast and fluid semi-3D graphics and original gameplay. It was the first games to combine hot bike racing with serious weaponry, a combination that remains unique to this day. Since then it has appeared on most console and computer formats in various guises, including an excellent 3DO version that never received the credit it deserved. Now it's the turn of the PlayStation, with an all-new 3D update of the Road Rash experience!

> **"...The tracks have been updated and improved, using the PlayStation's top polygon techniques to create over 100 miles of interconnected towns..."**

I Got a Rash!

So what have Electronic Arts retained from the original, and what new bits and pieces have been added? Well, obviously the game is still centred around the hottest bikes on the planet, all racing against each other in a mad metal meshing race for the finish line. Today's modern graphic techniques have replaced the simple sprites of the 16-bit days, though. We now have motion-captured riders and bikes that follow realistic physics models to give a true feel for motorbike racing. This ultra realism can work against games, though, as you often don't necessarily want true realism as it can make things



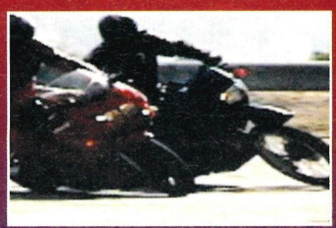


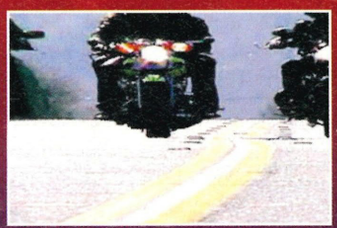


▲ Oi - who pinched my motorbike?

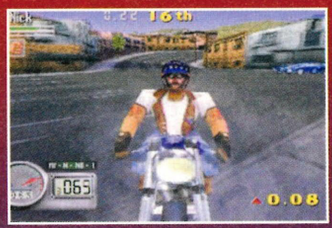
▼ FULL MOTION MAYHEM

Electronic Arts have filmed some manic FMV sequences to accompany the action in Road Rash 3D, including some bizarre costumes and pant-wettingly scary characters!





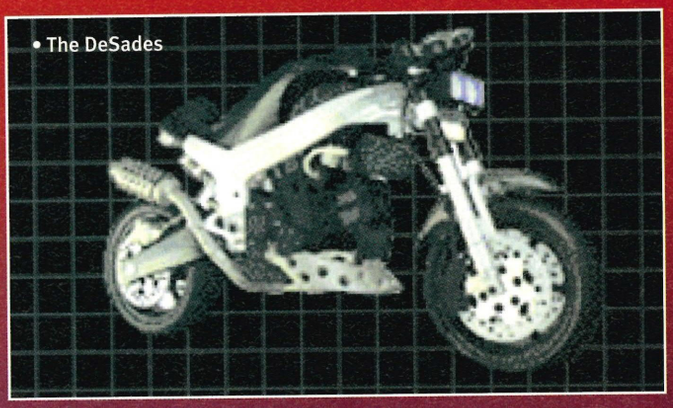




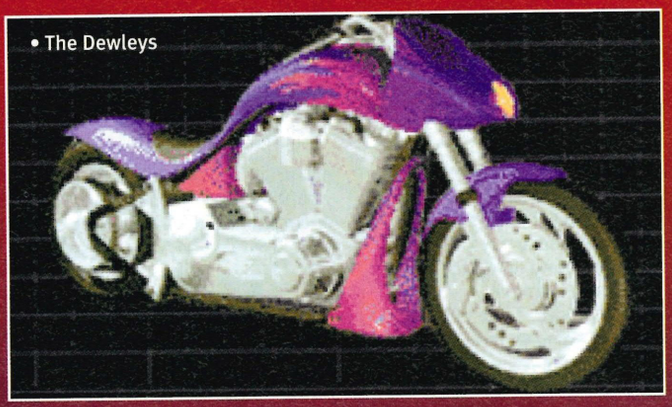
GANGS AND THEIR BIKES

The four gangs in Road Rash 3D each have vastly different bikes to ride, but all offer top speeds and exciting handling to give you the ultimate racing experience. Here are the four styles of bikes...

• The DeSades



• The Dewleys



• The Kaffe Boys



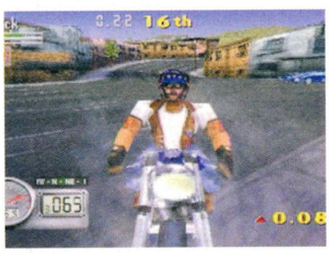
• The Techgeists



unplayable, but Road Rash 3D avoids this pitfall. The tracks have also been updated and improved, using the PlayStation's top polygon techniques to create over 100 miles of interconnected towns, countryside, freeways and canyon ridges. The terrain twists and turns through the backwaters of the USA and can often seem more like a roller coaster ride than a bike race, but this just bumps up the fun factor, with racers shouting 'Woo, hoo!' as they leap through the air on their machines.

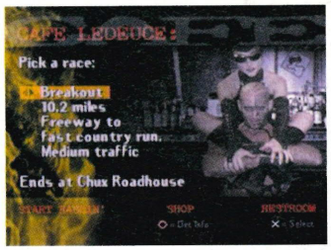
"...There are three kinds of racing game hidden beneath Road Rash 3D's exterior; Thrash, Big Game and Time Trial..."

One aspect of the Road Rash series that set the game apart from its rivals was the inclusion of gangs, and this updated game has four of the meanest looking groups you've ever seen. The DeSades hang out at the Le Deuce Café in the Southwest Territory, and are an insanely aggressive bunch who like to use cattle prods as their main weapons. Their arch-rivals are the Kaffe Boys who use the Kaffe Koma in the Southeast for their base. The Kaffe Boys are real race nuts, preferring the open roads to fighting. Their specialities are kicks and punches, but they have been known to use pipes and nunchakus too. Then there's The Dewleys who inhabit the Chux Roadhouse in the Northwest Territory. These are longhaired ponytail freaks that pack clubs and chains. These guys ride around in groups. Finally



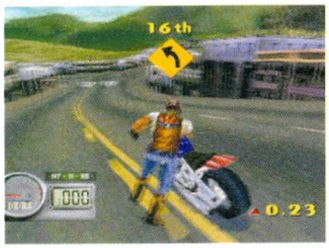








Is that Lemmy from Motorhead pulling a wheelie?

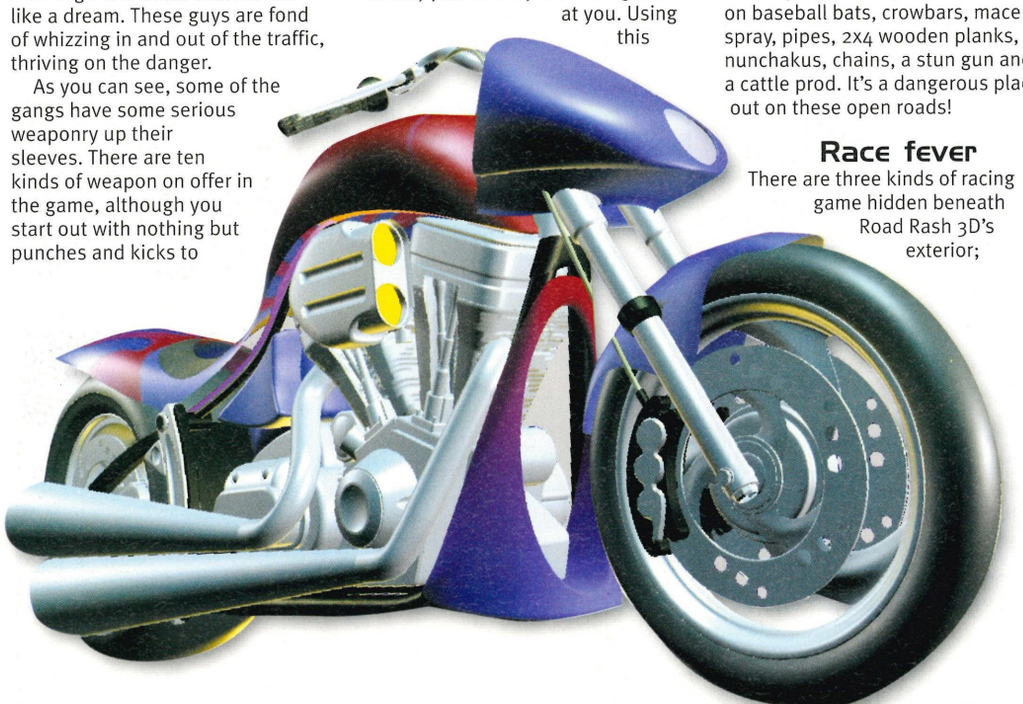




there's The Techgeists of Der Panzer Club in the Northeast Territory, with their high-end bikes that handle like a dream. These guys are fond of whizzing in and out of the traffic, thriving on the danger.

As you can see, some of the gangs have some serious weaponry up their sleeves. There are ten kinds of weapon on offer in the game, although you start out with nothing but punches and kicks to protect yourself. To grab new weapons you must punch at an enemy just as they are hitting out at you. Using this technique you can get your hands on baseball bats, crowbars, mace spray, pipes, 2x4 wooden planks, nunchakus, chains, a stun gun and a cattle prod. It's a dangerous place out on these open roads!

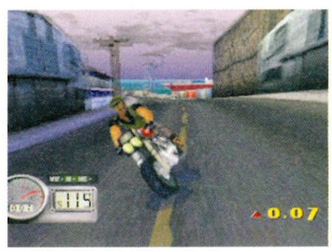
> "...It's also possible to get busted by the police in Big Game mode, forcing you to pay a fine to continue. ..."



Race fever

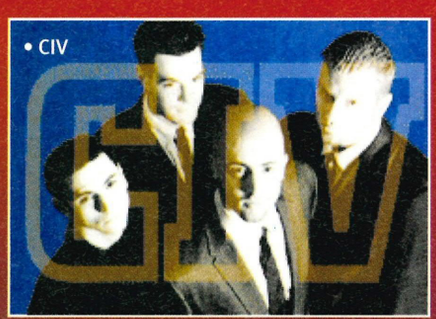
There are three kinds of racing game hidden beneath Road Rash 3D's exterior; Thrash, Big Game and Time Trial. In Thrash mode you get to choose from a selection of simple levels and easy bikes to start off with. This mode is really for getting to know the game and having some instant Road Rash fun. If you place third or better in your race you get to move on to the next level. The Big Game is where the action really is in Road Rash 3D. You start out with a small sum of money and the choice of a wide variety of bikes from all four styles - Race Replica, Sport, Rat and Cruiser. If you finish in the top three, you get some mega bucks to add to your stash. You can buy new bikes with this. Finishing fourth or lower gives a few measly bucks, but you won't qualify for the next race in the series. If you crash and wreck your bike, you have to pay the repair bills and start over. It's also possible to get busted by the police in Big Game mode, forcing you to pay a fine to continue.

Then comes the Time Trial. Up to six players can battle it out here, but they must play one at a time. All must have the same bike and track, and it's a simple racing situation,

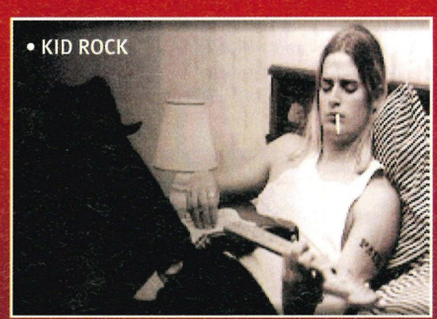


THRASH TIME

A good game is nothing without a top soundtrack to zip along to, and Electronic Arts has joined together with Atlantic Records to bring six top thrash bands to the PlayStation screen. You can buy a separate soundtrack album of the game, but then why not just stick your PlayStation game into a normal CD player?



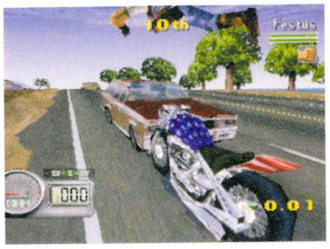




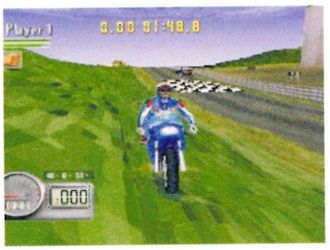












with or without traffic, to decide who is the best biker around.

Not many games can boast over 100 miles of interconnected roads; you can probably play Road Rash 3D for weeks and never see the same white line twice! The game looks great and the soundtrack is a real treat for all fans of trash metal, but there are a couple of niggly little things that spoil the game slightly.

Break a bike!

I really don't understand why the programmers have done away with the 'run back to your bike' sequence the original game had. That's what always made Road Rash feel more real, the fact that you had to go searching for your smashed up motorbike on foot when you crashed and burned. In this new version you're simply stuck back on the road ready to race on. I know this is a small thing, but it's really

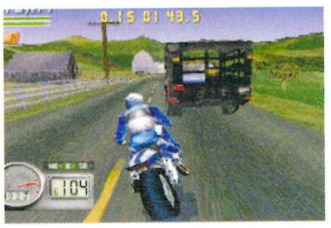
"... You really need to spend a long time practising your racing skills before you're going to be able to finish in the top three in any race..."

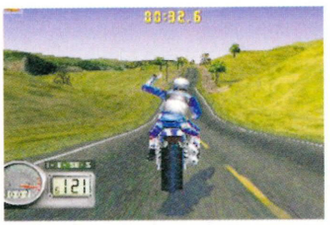
stuck in my throat!

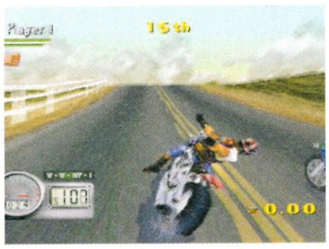
The only other problem I could see was the control of the high powered bikes. You really need to spend a long time practising your racing skills before you're going to be able to finish in the top three in any race. The controls are ultra-sensitive, so if you steer hard to the left or right you simply wobble and fall off. But then this is all part of the learning curve, I suppose. It's good to see the spectacular crashes are still in here to keep the game alive; falling from your bike can be a real hoot! If you hit a car, for example, both rider and bike go flying through the air, skidding along the ground when they land. Occasionally the biker lands in a heap and the bike comes flying in and crashes onto his head! A new way of passing these killer cars is to simply wheely when you approach one - you fly right over the top of the offending car and land on the road again, ready to carry on the race.

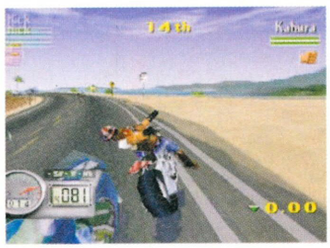
Electronic Arts have done a good job of updating a classic game to the PlayStation, but if only they could have playtested it a little more, and stuck with the old way of returning to your bike after crashes, they would have had a sure-fire hit on their hands. As it stands, it's worth a play before you pay!

DOUG EPM













Second Opinion

What really impresses me about Road Rash 3D is its degree of interactivity. You can drive almost anywhere. The game has a huge amount of road to race on, and the weapons are far better integrated into the racing than in previous RR games.

Ian

The Score

Publisher	EA
Developer	EA
Released	AUGUST '98
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	DRIVING
Players	1
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY
8

ORIGINALITY
7

LIFESPAN
7

SOUND
8

GRAPHICS
8

OVERALL
82%

in summary

A top-notch conversion from the 16-bit, but not without niggling problems.

Bugriders



The Race of Kings...

The elderly Emperor Leptus I, ruler of the lands of Entymion for the last 48 years, is dying. To decide who succeeds him, 16 pretenders to the throne take part in a bug-racing tourney, the winner becoming the new ruler. Beats fighting it out Wars of the Roses-style, I guess. Eight of these competitors are controllable, so pick your player, mount your flying insectoid and take to the skies...



So begins Bugriders, GT Interactive's insect-inspired aerial combat racer. Having chosen your chum and mounted your flying insect steed, you must race or ruck your way through a series of progressively more difficult courses, the winner earning the right to rule. After setting the difficulty level it's time for the main event - choose between Time Trial, where you must beat the clock, Campaign, a series of races, and Exterminate where you charge around a track blasting the buggery out of the other bugs. Kill your quota to progress.



Each bugrider has a standard, unimpressive weapon which isn't very powerful but has unlimited ammo and a fast rate of fire. You can earn more spectacular ordinance by flying through different-coloured rings found on the tracks. You can also earn precious time in this way. Like a jockey, a rider makes his steed speed up by hitting it with a riding crop - overdo it and it slows in protest. You can also slow down using the reins and drift with the shoulder buttons.

> **"...after only a few minutes' play, the game's fundamental flaws become all too apparent..."**



There's no Flies on Me...

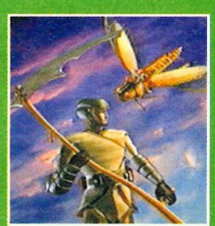
Sounds impressive, doesn't it? Unfortunately it isn't - it's fun for a while, but after only a few minutes' play, the game's fundamental flaws become all too apparent.

For starters, the game's seriously lacking in the interactivity

ACE RACERS

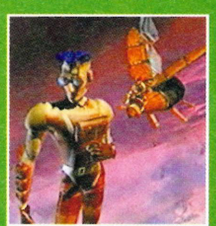
These are the colourful characters you get to choose from...

Dalin the Farmer



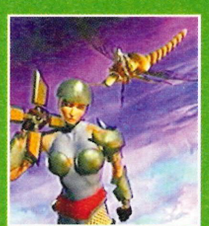
Power: 4
Agility: 3
Training: 3
Speed: 3
A farm hand with escapist dreams of greatness, Dalin seeks vengeance against the Royal Atropa. Only with the throne can he turn her tide of destruction.

Meyer the Inventor



Power: 2
Agility: 4
Training: 4
Speed: 2
Unfulfilled as one of the kingdom's great scientists, Meyer invented a clockwork mount to unveil at the Great Race. He hopes to end the ridicule he has endured by winning the race with his advanced creation.

Lenil the Princess



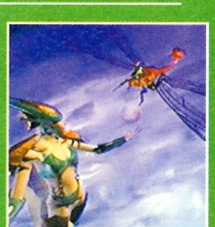
Power: 1
Agility: 4
Training: 2
Speed: 5
The Emperor's misbegotten daughter, Lenil was secretly provided for by Leptus. After the truth was revealed to her on her mother's death, Lenil races to regain her birthright and take her place on the throne.

Kamin, Ousted Noble



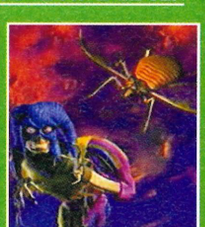
Power: 5
Agility: 1
Training: 5
Speed: 1
Disowned by the royal family for his mischievous and conniving nature, Kamin's greatest scheme was to regain his inheritance by competing against and defeating the siblings who ousted him.

Cara the Charmer



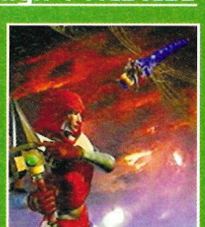
Power: 2
Agility: 3
Training: 2
Speed: 5
Though tolerant of all people, Cara's own clan have been misunderstood and persecuted. Cara plans to use her mystical bond with insects to win the race and eliminate ignorance and prejudice.

Pehn the Evil Jester



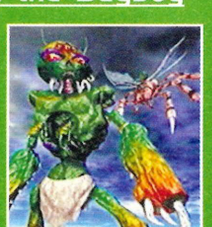
Power: 3
Agility: 4
Training: 3
Speed: 3
Condemned to die in the Emperor's dungeon, Pehn's lifeless husk was resurrected by Tiller the magician. Now a hideous corpse, his participation is the final insult to Leptus' rule.

Vesta- High Priestess

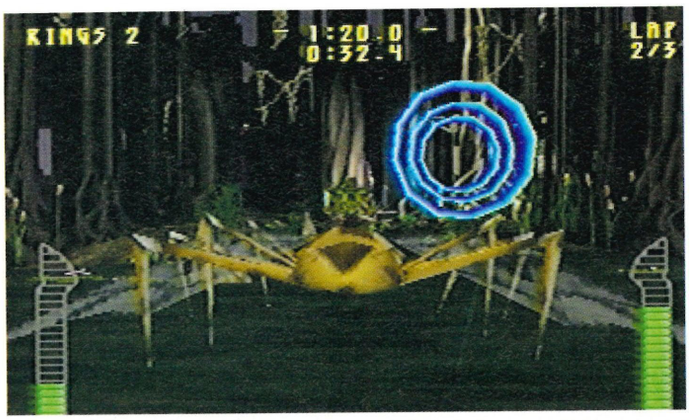


Power: 2
Agility: 5
Training: 2
Speed: 4
As the Church's chosen champion, Vesta's victory would re-establish its power over Entymion. Her increasing frustration with the church makes the throne an looming temptation.

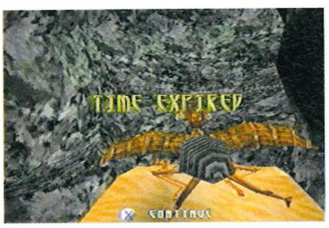
Xexyck the Bugboy



Power: 4
Agility: 2
Training: 5
Speed: 1
Born among the first children afflicted with the khritor disease, Xexyck's features are barely recognisable as human. Following a brave escape, he competes for the freedom of his people.



Fly through the blue rings for extra time.

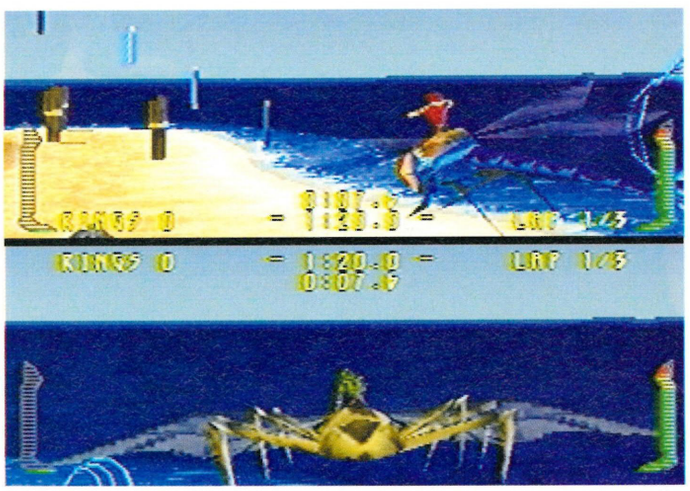




department. Although not on rails, it often feels like you're flying through an invisible tunnel, with movement artificially restricted by unseen barriers. Your actions are also restricted. You can't slow to a standstill, reverse or fly away from the path by any significant margin. To a large degree the beasts fly themselves. Your rider is dragged around the course to such an extent that if you let go of the joypad, you follow the corners anyway. Admittedly, not very successfully - banging walls and obstacles loses you time and eventually kills your bug and causes you to fall. Even so, it does nothing to let the player feel in control. Can you imagine a driving game that turned the corners for you? Because of the aerial nature of the courses, the tracks aren't visually very clear and it's often very difficult to anticipate the corners so perhaps this assistance is necessary to stop you getting hopelessly lost. This doesn't stop it being seriously unsatisfying, though.

In the Campaign mode, where the emphasis is on racing, your position is largely irrelevant. Instead of taking the lead, you must concentrate on hitting every time-giving blue ring in the game. Miss too many and you run out of time before completing the required three laps - you're up against the timer, and your opponents are merely a distraction. Combat is catered for in Campaign mode, but it's best to concentrate on the clock rather than clocking your foes. It's bloody annoying when they do it to you though; you take the hits from behind, and have very little capacity for avoiding them. This is especially frustrating when you fall victim to the weapon which slows you down for ten seconds, all-but killing your chances of finishing the stage.

The Extermination mode also takes place on a race track against the clock, but here it's the number of foes you kill that qualifies you for the next stage. As you're not racing, what's the point of flying round in circles as if you were? This would be much better set in an open arena with full 3D movement, instead of being dragged around a track by the CPU. Also, your opponents don't seem to compete realistically here - I certainly didn't see them fire at each other. They behave more like mobile targets and hazards than people who, like you, are out to win (as the game's about insects, I suppose I'd better call them 'drones'). Finally, the Time Trial offers little - if you could choose your course instead of (or as well as) racing them in order, it would function as an extremely useful practice mode. But you can't. So it doesn't.



Due to the screen size, the two-player game is poor.

> **"...Because of the aerial nature of the courses, the tracks aren't visually very clear..."**

Bugriders isn't a disaster - it's quite playable for a while, especially with an analogue controller, but its strengths can't compensate for its flaws. Congratulations to whoever painted the static artwork, though - it's amazing.

IAN EPM









Second Opinion

Hmmm... It's not a disaster of monumental proportions, but it's not particularly good either. Basically, it's a mixed bag of ideas which don't really work in practice, which is a pity.

Darren

The Score

Publisher	GT INTERACTIVE
Developer	N-SPACE
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	COMBAT RACING
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔
Passwords	✔
Analogue	✔

GAMEPLAY
7

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
5

SOUND
6

GRAPHICS
7

OVERALL
51%

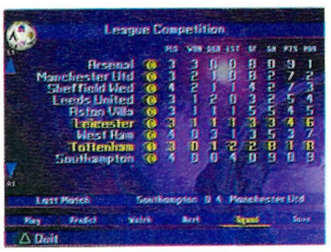
in summary

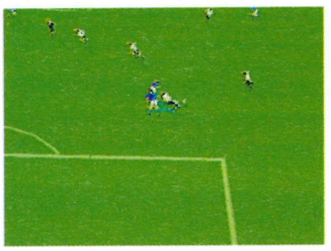
Interesting but uninspiring, original but not outstanding, fun but flawed.

Kick Off World

At least it's got the classic overhead view



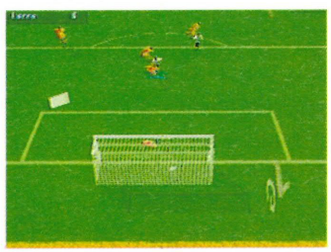












What is it, then? Why the hell do I get all the football games? I'm not even a massive fan of the bloody sport. So why me? After reviewing adidas Power Soccer I really thought it would be the last of the soccer games for me. I mean, I've already had any pre-World Cup fever destroyed, and then Kick Off World comes along and puts the final boot in.

Kick Off World isn't terrible, it's just so average it hurts. In fact, it's so middle of the road that it's probably got 2.4 children, lives in a two-bedroom flat on a Wimpy estate and drives a Ford Fiesta with one of those three plastic bubble air freshners bought at Charlie Brown's with the money from the office clerk job. I think you get the idea. Kick Off World doesn't provoke a reaction because it's neither good nor bad. I'd like to leave it at that, but duty calls...

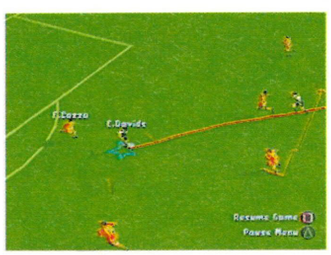
Kick Off World attempts to cover every aspect of football in one fell swoop. And to an extent, it succeeds. There's a relatively simple management section, loads of different tournaments and leagues, plus the World Cup. Anco even managed to include the original Kick Off overhead view, which is one hell of a selling point to players like myself, who used to eat drink and breathe Kick Off 2. That was when Kick Off was a decent game, though. Ever since Kick Off 2, the name has been on a decline. A lot of effort has gone into taking Kick Off back to the higher echelons of the football game genre, but I'm afraid due to the fact that everything is so average, these efforts have failed.

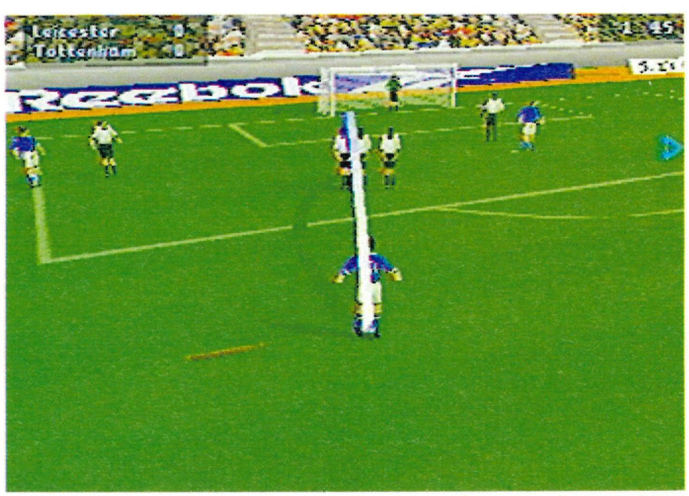
Still, it's fun to be able to hark back to the days of Kick Off 2 and that oh-so-cool overhead view, which to me is the saviour of Kick Off World. If it wasn't for the inclusion of this, Kick Off World would join the adidas Power Soccer 98 league. At first, though, even the classic Kick Off didn't do it for me. It's not until I got my head into old-style gameplay mode I really started to enjoy it. You can forget skill modes, speed-ups and any type of special moves, because classic Kick Off is so easy to play. Shoot and Pass are the only controls needed to give you an exciting and fast-paced although not very realistic game of arcade soccer. It hasn't lost anything in its transition to the PlayStation, and classic Kick Off is still as fun as it ever was. The problem is that it's been surpassed by far better 3D football games in the recent years, so classic Kick Off alone is not enough to warrant shelling out for Kick Off World.

> "... A lot of effort has gone into taking Kick Off back to the higher echelons of the football game genre..."

Kick Off 3D

If only the 3D game on Kick Off World could live up to the playability of classic Kick Off. Alas, it doesn't, and although it's not terrible, it's no where near as good as the best soccer games like World League Soccer and World Cup 98. The game can be played at a number of different speeds, but to me it really doesn't matter because



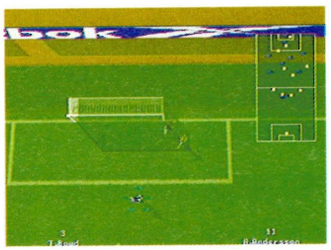


▲ it's not a loo roll thrown by fans, but the Free Kick Marker.

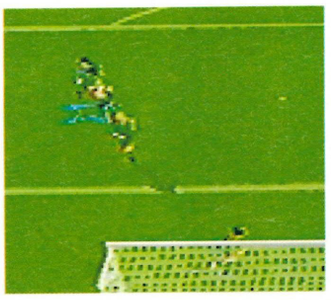
▼ DOH!

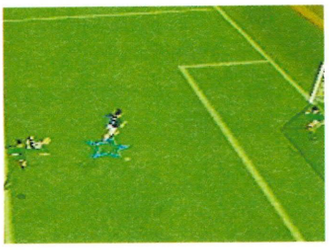
As our older readers probably know, the Kick Off series hasn't done too well on any format since Kick Off 2. Kick Off World, although not the best footy game around, has gone some way to getting them on the right track, though. Anyway, we've got to tell you about the time Kick Off hit rock-bottom. The commercial release of Kick Off 4 on the Amiga came free with the bug to beat all bugs. It was actually impossible to finish a match because the injury time at the end of the first half went on for infinity. DOH!











no amount of speed can take the gameplay out of that hideous grey area known an monotony.

"...The management section, although heavily boasted about in the press release, doesn't really live up to the hype..."

You don't find yourself switching off and rushing down for a refund after the first game, because it looks as though the potential is there for a good game. After hours and days of play, though, you start to realise you feel the same about Kick Off World now as you did when you started playing. Everything is so normal, but above all incredibly average.

Playing the 3D game isn't half as easy as classic Kick Off and to its credit there are plenty of moves to learn. This does, at times, make for a decent game, but it never stays interesting for long enough to make it a fulfilling experience. There's also some niggly aspects of the game that serve to frustrate. For instance, the referee is always so tough. Taking a free kick is also frustrating as you always seem to end up hitting the wrong button. The flaws can be overcome and forgotten about, but I'd better remind you Kick Off World is still no more than average.

Thankfully, the different leagues and tournaments can all be played in either classic or 3D modes so at least you get to play the 1998 World Cup tournament in good, old-fashioned classic Kick Off style. Which is a bit of a saviour if you ask me.

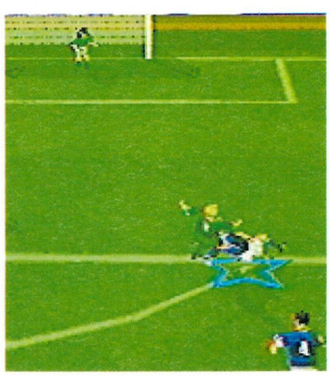
Kick Off Manager

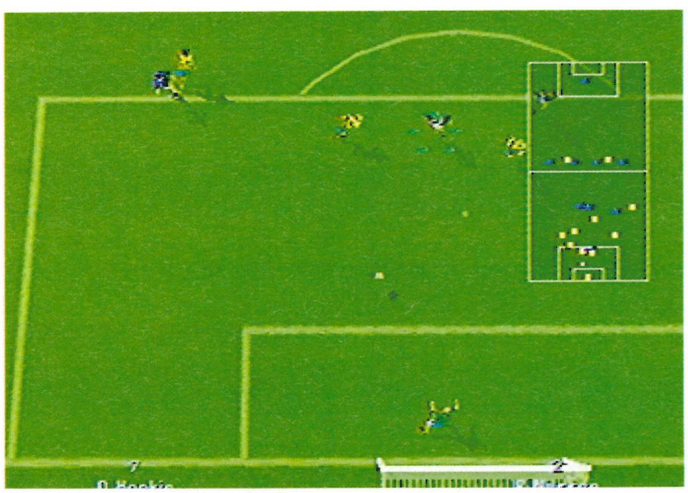
The management section, although heavily boasted about in the press release, doesn't really live up to the hype. There's plenty for you to do, but after playing Premier Manager 98, I must admit I was a bit closed off to this section of the game. Still, I gave it a good go and found it's very workable, although it still doesn't help Kick Off World in that fight against the word 'average'. You get to set all the usual formations and squad statistics, and as well as having the chance to play the game you can get the computer to predict the results, watch the action or play in the game yourself. You also have the opportunity to add some tasty foreign talent to your team by entering the transfer market. It's not Premier Manager 98, but Kick Off World isn't a dedicated management game so you can't expect it to be.

Kick Off World isn't big on the graphics department; more a case of average, but then you probably already guessed that, didn't you? There's literally hundreds of different kits, although the stadiums are a bit thin on the ground. The actual player animation and style is up to a decent standard, although the animation is a little limited compared to the likes of World Cup 98 and WLS. Overall, the graphics aren't about to grab you by the balls and squeeze with the strength of a motorised G-clamp, but then again, they're not about to send you running to the toilet with a mouth full of sick forcing itself out of your nostrils. Sort of middle of the road, then. Ho-hum.

All of the ingredients for Kick Off World could've come from Marks & Spencers, and with a little flair they could have been cooked up into a tasty football flambe. But instead of drafting in the Two Fat Ladies for the job, they've gone and hired Dave and Gary from McDonald's. As you can guess, the result is no more than a flat game that tastes of nothing and can only be described as nondescript. Instead of going for three main sections of an average nature, Anco should have stuck with one aspect and put all of their efforts into it. I would much prefer to see a highly-polished classic Kick Off, a boundary-pushing 3D soccer game or an in-depth and intriguing management game. As it stands, lumping all three things into one terribly average game really doesn't do anything for me. Still, fans of Kick Off 2 will be happy, for a while.

SAUL EPM





The classic overhead view, including the classic radar.

Second Opinion

Good, but not great. It's bit like David Beckham - that sod cost us a place in the quarter-finals. If anyone has any Beckham jokes, send 'em in.

Ian

The Score

Publisher	FUNSOFT
Developer	ANCO
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	SPORTS SIM
Players	1-4
Memory Card	✓

GAMEPLAY
7

ORIGINALITY
7

LIFESPAN
6

SOUND
5

GRAPHICS
7

OVERALL
70%

in summary

It may be on the high end of average, but it's still average.



Men In Black

Men in Cack, more like...

I'm sure most (if not all) of you out there in Readerland are familiar with the plot and characters of Men in Black, so I'll avoid a bland regurgitation and skip straight to the game itself. Bravely, it's a Resident Evil clone, taking the game's predilection for gloomily, detailed backdrops, skewed camera angles and desperate firefights and bolting it onto the hyper-successful alien-busters formula of the movie. When things kick off, you're in control of Agent J when he's still an NYPD cop on the trail of what he mistakenly thinks are ordinary criminals. He's called to an apartment to investigate a possible burglary only to find it filled with bizarre extraterrestrial-related literature and ancient Aztec-era artefacts that look a bit other-worldly, plus, more pressingly, a ticking time bomb that has to be de-activated by pulling a protruding wire out at a specific point in its countdown. Sinister men are also in the flat, who immediately attack, leaving you no choice but to waste them with your 9mm or trusty fist/feet combinations.



Aiming the gun is in the vein of Res Evil, with one button to draw, aiming via the D-Pad, and a press of circle to shoot as a crosshairs lights up the target if your sighting is true. However, pretty soon it's obvious that this aiming system makes it easier to hit a target when they're at a great distance, as close-in even a single shift of firing angle makes you miss by a wide margin. The hand-to-hand fighting shows similar flaws, as you have to hold down a button to put up your dukes, but while doing this it's impossible to move, meaning being out of touch by even a tiny amount during the course of a fight requires you to drop your guard, walk a short distance, and then put it back up again, during which time the other guy is smacking you upside the head.

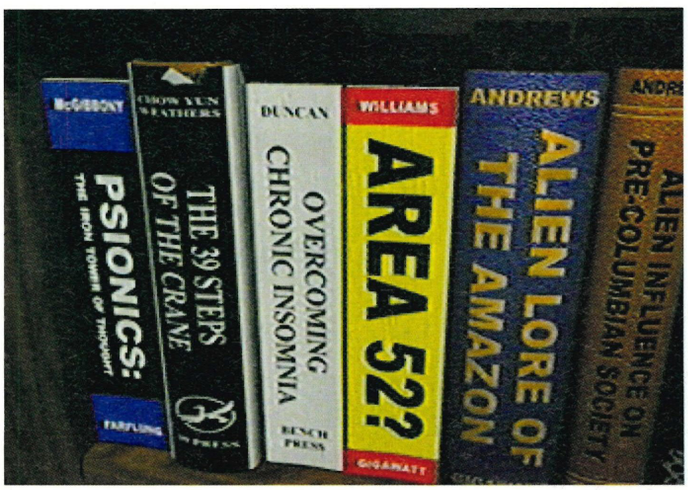




> "...Winning comes courtesy of the good old 'hammer the buttons very fast and pray' method..."

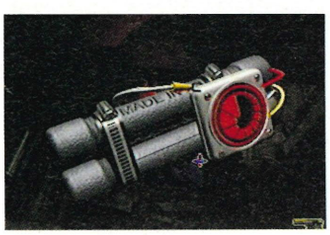


Ammo is extremely limited as well, with extra clips being practically invisible when lying on the floor, so fisticuffs is a recurring and unexciting process (tellingly reminiscent of the combat in that other piffling film licence, Spawn).Winning comes courtesy of the good old 'hammer the buttons very fast and pray' method, as it's largely pointless attempting to block the aggressors' seemingly-unguided and almost-random attacks. J has an energy bar that depletes with violent harassment, and finds medi-kits (both large and small) that can either restore his vigour partially or completely, which are well-flipping-needed as energy loss is extremely frequent, frustrating and almost unavoidable. He can also jump (for some reason emitting a pathetically effete 'ooh' every time he leaps) and sprint at a slightly increased pace, but maneuvering him away from gunfire or around obstacles is no mean feat as there seems to be a serious time lag between inputting a command and it being carried out. During a gunfight, it's also too easy to be knocked back and forth by a crossfire that's impossible to avoid, the character being bashed about incessantly, unable to aim or fire as he is being stunned almost constantly. Watching the health bar drain away seems the only option, up to the point where ducking out to the inventory for a first aid pack becomes vital. However, mystifyingly, you sometimes pop back to the game after doing this to



▲ This bookcase provides the only humour I encountered.













immediately expire, which again tends to make the teeth grind. All in all, the combat in Men in Black is spectacularly unsatisfying and even chore-ful, and makes the exploration seem a lot more tedious that it needs to be.

Gloom with no View

All of this harsh criticism is a touch tragic. For about five minutes after booting up, I was fairly impressed with the look of the game. While not being a serious rival to Resident Evil's masterful hyper-real depictions, the graphics are still pleasantly drawn and suitably dark-hued to briefly create a sizeable dollop of atmosphere. An unfortunate side-effect of this is that it's so dark, a lot of time is spent squinting at the screen, trying to make out the edges of unseen objects you're running into. It's also a quite common occurrence to arrive at a new screen only to be baffled as to where the exit is, what level is adjacent to what, and where sheer drops are situated, one of which led to my final and irrevocable giving up on the game as I blundered into a fatal gap that quite clearly wasn't damn-well there. The big main sprite looks pretty good, though, the digitised and ray-traced face of housewife's favourite Will Smith holding together well at close ranges, but it gets increasingly ropey as he strides off into the far distance, becoming an-ill defined dot. This makes aiming the revolver even harder to achieve.

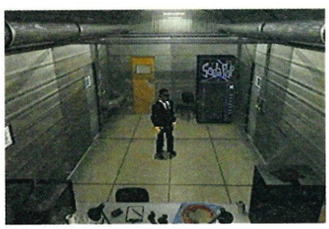
> "...The lack of interactivity, tension and excitement almost reaches into negative numbers..."

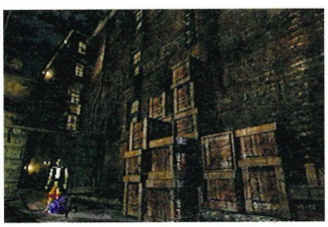
Kudos Parasite

As you've probably noticed from the screenshots, I didn't even progress to the point where the hero becomes a Man In Black and has access to the more exotic weapons, gets to explore MIB headquarters and encounter more interesting alien thingies. This is because in spite of my innate professionalism and the wish to write a review that looks as interesting as possible, it was just beyond the scope of my patience and ability to persevere with the game to this point. The lack of interactivity, tension and excitement almost reaches into negative numbers, while the numerous wooden moments and lack of both invention and finesse make Men in Black only barely playable by the most generous of standards. Yet again a lucrative movie tie-in has excreted a half-cocked clone of a great game, offering a hollow facsimile of the original while slacking away from putting in the most basic bones of decent play dynamics.

Whether it's possible to do a movie-licensed game that's any good nowadays seems a fair question, because of both the financial pressures to make a return on the vast expense involved and/or the constraints of time (so as to ride the back of popular and media attention). This, however, is a game that looks OK for the 15 seconds required for a TV advert or quick glimpse in a games outlet, enough to woo the gullible into shelling out for a piece of familiar-looking fluff that latches onto the cool of something else like some kind of money-greedy kudos parasite. Avoid it like a case of intergalactic pubic lice.

CHRISTIAN EPM







Second Opinion

'We see things that you don't need to see' - like this game.

Ian

The Score

Publisher	GREMLIN
Developer	GIGAWATT
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	3D ADVENTURE
Players	1
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY
3

ORIGINALITY
5

LIFESPAN
4

SOUND
6

GRAPHICS
6

OVERALL
38%

in summary

Terrible.

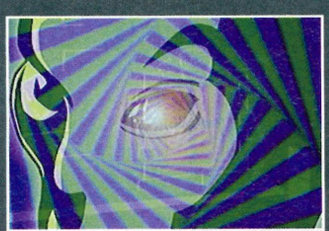
POP-ART

Ironically, the coolest thing I found in MIB were these pseudo-Art-Deco/comic book/Seventies psych-out representations of some of the scenes in the game (and the groovy Danny Elfman Theremin-fuelled soundtrack).











Crime Killer

Proving that crime doesn't pay...

Being a gamer of long standing (and occasionally other postures), I was hoping Crime Killer would be a Chase HQ for the PlayStation Generation. For reasons which will become clear, it's not such a game, but it's far from disastrous.

The game takes place in the near future, after a chemicals giant developed a bug to eat away chemical waste. After six months, the bacteria at one of the hugely-profitable recycling farms began to mutate. The new strain fed on petroleum and oil, and as it was airborne, quickly spread. It soon gobbled up the world's entire supply of oil-based fuels, forcing humanity to turn to electrically-powered vehicles instead. One year on, the powerful URIEL Corporation bought the City Police Department of your crime-ravaged town. They supply the hardware, you just drive it...

A fascinating plot, but largely irrelevant to the game. Crime Killer is basically a driving shooter where you chase and blast a number of road-hog baddies to complete each of the game's 15 missions. You have a basic weapons set-up of a cannon and a pacifier, which disrupts the vehicle's electricals, stopping the foe and rendering its occupants unconscious at the same time. More advanced weaponry can be found later, both as secondary weapons offered at the start and power-ups found during the mission. Another useful power-up is the shield repair - your foes fire back, of course, as do some 'civilian' cars. Scraping walls and crashing your vehicle damages shields too - the art of survival is making sure they last till the end of the stage.

Police - Stop!

Unlike Chase HQ, you're not chasing fleeing enemies down an open highway, racing against a time limit which expires when the crooks escape. Instead, you patrol a small area, scanning the on-screen radar for criminals, who are then displayed. A line connects your radar representation to theirs, showing which way you need to go to catch them. Your 'beat' is fearsomely self-contained - there are no roads into or out of it, so it functions like a maze - the game works like a 3D predatorial Pac-Man played from the ghost's perspective. There's no time limit, so you only lose if your shields blow.

Although the enemies can't 'escape' in any realistic sense, there's no need to have them drive around the same circuit of roads as if on rails. Their AI is non-existent - I once chased a villain over a junction and he sold me a dummy, making as if to turn off the main road but turning back again at the last minute. It worked, and I was in the wall. Chasing him again over the same piece of road, though, he did exactly the same thing again - and again - and again! Enemy cars' routes are pre-programmed to the inch.

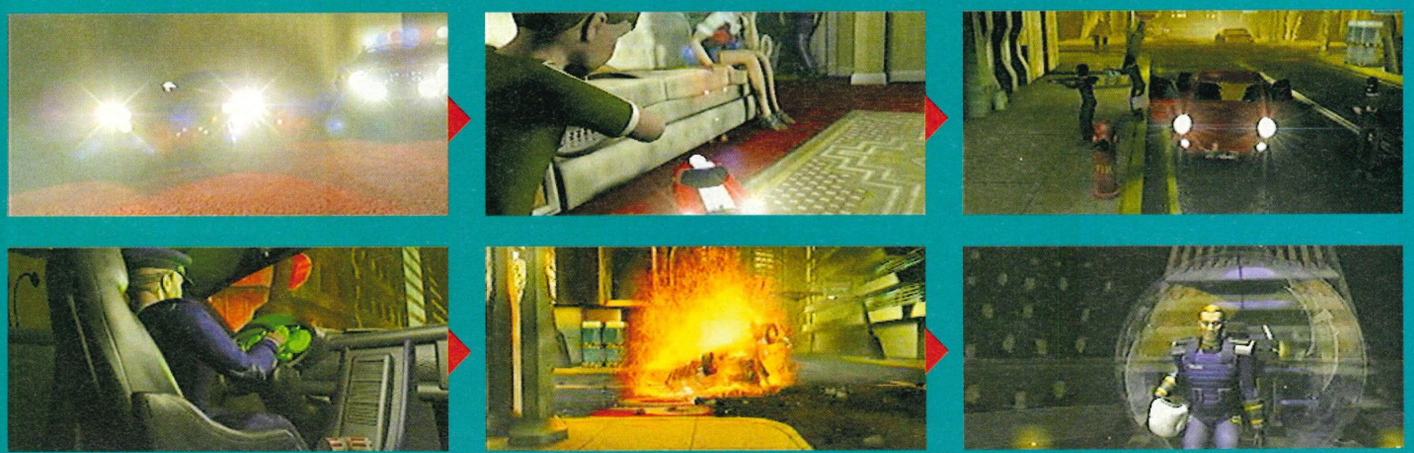
> "...The razor-sharp graphics belt along like Linford Christie after a bad curry..."

Unfortunately, the AI of the citizens' cars is no better. They get in your way something chronic, even when you've got your siren switched on, making no attempt to avoid you at all. The roads are usually very narrow, making it difficult to take evasive action and

NO CRIME, NO KIDDING...

The chase is on. Catching the fleeing felons, the cops run them to ground on - the living room floor? It's all a game, and you're just a kid, but your dad's a real policeman.

One day you see an armed robbery. Your dad uses his car to block the path of the getaway vehicle, but it doesn't stop, and he's killed. Years later you join the cops yourself. By now the local Police Department has been bought out by a multinational conglomerate, who refit it with equipment to match that of the criminals. But are their motives as honourable as they seem?





It's surprising how many innocent victims you can take before being fired.

watch the radar at the same time - you often take the easy option and just blast them. Eventually you get warnings and then dismissed for this (even, alarmingly, if the civilian car is taking pot-shots at you), but you get away with a hell of a lot before it happens. Perhaps it would be more satisfying if prangs with other cars were more damaging but easier to avoid.

Slick on the Draw

Despite these design and AI quirks, the game's slick execution wins it many brownie points. Chasing after a crim is a thrilling experience due to the dynamic vehicle handling, which is set just right, and the razor-sharp graphics which belt along like Linford Christie after a bad curry. You could ignore all the game's faults if it wasn't so one bloody dimensional. Chase a car and shoot it... Chase a car and shoot it with your pacifier... 'Chase' a parked car and shoot it... Find a bomb and shoot it... Chase a bike and film it... The list goes on. Every mission is the same as the last one, with almost no variety whatsoever.

You can spend all day picking faults with Crime Killer, but the high-octane (sorry, 'voltage' - no petrol, remember?) white-knuckle thrills are there. Buy this and it will soon slide to the back of your collection, only brought out for the occasional play, but you'll still be reluctant to part with it. A good game, but with a little more depth and variety, it could've been a killer.

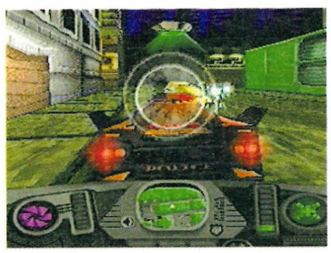
IAN EPM

Second Opinion

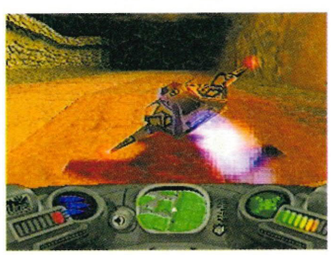
This game could've been a real killer, but it isn't - and that's a crime. Its flaws don't completely destroy the playability, but they do leave you wondering what might have been.

Alan













DOUBLE THE TROUBLE...

There are two two-player offerings available in Crime Killer. Holotag is a test of driving skill, where you must pick up more tags than your opponent in the given time limit. Weapons are disabled, unlike the Weapons Test event, which is basically a deathmatch. In both cases, you get to choose your vehicle but both players must use the same type - no pitting a plane against a car here!



The Score

Publisher	INTERPLAY
Developer	PIXELOGIC
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	SHOOT-'EM-UP
Players	1-2
Analogue	✔
Steering Wheel	✔

GAMEPLAY
7

ORIGINALITY
6

LIFESPAN
6

SOUND
6

GRAPHICS
8

OVERALL
64%

in summary

Fun but flawed, and too damned samey.

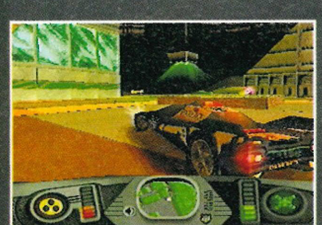
MEAN MACHINES...

You get to drive three different vehicles in Crime Killer.

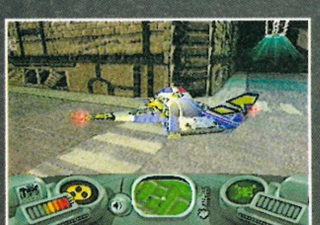
• The Patrol Car
This is the police workhorse, a fast, powerful machine used to eliminate or pacify lawbreakers. It can take quite a pounding before it blows too.

• The Motorbike
This is the fastest, most manoeuvrable vehicle. It's not as tough as the car, but has all the speed you need - ideal, for example, for taking out a series of bombs about to explode.

• The Hoverplane
Slow but highly manoeuvrable, the Hoverplane turns on a sixpence and can even fly backwards. Great for surveillance. Looks like an Angel Interceptor from Captain Scarlet.







Arcades Greatest Hits- The Atari Collection 2

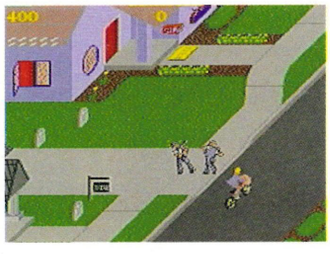
Don't look back in anger?

Six games on one disk should sway most people to splash out for this. Take off those rose-tinted specs and read this first, though.



PAPERBOY

Many moons ago, a mysterious-looking cabinet appeared in my local arcade. Instead of sporting the usual two joysticks and six buttons set-up, it came with a set of handlebars. That cabinet housed the infamous Paperboy, a game that was talked about as much as it was played and a game which, sadly, should've stayed in that specialist cabinet all those many moons ago. The problem is although the game has been reincarnated for the PlayStation in its original form, and with the gameplay firmly intact, Paperboy is just not playable with a joypad. And, alas, there isn't a handlebar joypad available for the PlayStation yet.



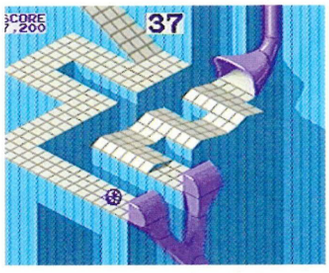
If you didn't know, the object of the game is to ride your bike up a street and deliver papers to the right houses. Miss a house and they cancel their subscription. Of course, the street is packed full of obstacles like road works, cars, animals and even drunken brawlers. There are only three streets to tackle, but at the end of each one is a short BMX course. And that's about it. Paperboy hasn't really stood the test of time, and although it's fun for an hour or so, you won't find yourself coming back to it.

60%

MARBLE MADNESS

The simplest of ideas takes top honours in this collection. All you have to do is control a marble through cool-looking and very treacherous 3D mazes to reach the goal before the time limit runs out. As you roll around each maze you come across many a hazard, such as moving acid pools, mean black marbles, rubber mallets and death-inducing drop-offs. There's always something to worry about, and although the marble doesn't move at a massive rate of knots, the game still feels fast and frantic. It's bloody hard, though, and a Continue option would have been welcome.

The original arcade cabinet came



with a trackerball device which you had to spin with gusto to make the marble move. Like Paperboy and the handlebars, this type of device isn't available for the PlayStation. However, the programmers have had the sense to make the game analogue compatible, which helps a great deal, especially after trying it with the normal D-Pad which is very hard to use.

Marble Madness is what retro gaming is all about - great but simple gameplay and addictiveness that rivals even the best Columbia has to offer.

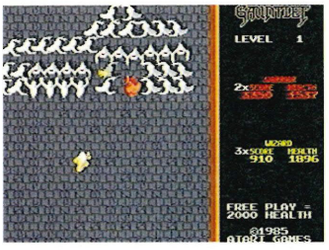
90%



GAUNTLET

What can I say? If you haven't heard of Gauntlet, you're either currently knee-high to Jimmy Krankee or you've picked up the wrong magazine and this month's extreme Knitting is still waiting for you at the newsagents.

Still, if you've never played Gauntlet, the basic idea is to control one of four classic characters around a mass of different mazes filled with all manner of monsters, creatures and ghosts. What made it so special in the arcade was that it was the first four-player arcade game. It invoked a spirit of co-operation that had never been seen before in an arcade. No more were smelly two-foot-high kids threatening you with their big brothers for ten pee so they could kick your ass on a game. They'd still threaten you, of course (it's in their blood), but it would be to play with you in a nice friendly game of Gauntlet.



This co-operative spirit transforms perfectly to the PlayStation, as do the graphics and gameplay, pixel for pixel and move for move. Gauntlet deserves its place in history and thanks to this Multi Tap-serving rendition, you too can be threatened by yobs and experience one of the first and best multi-player games ever.

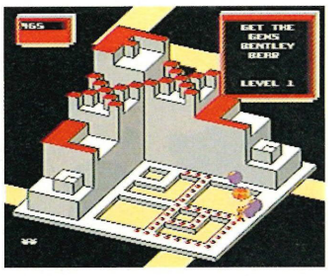
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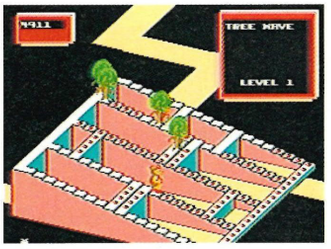


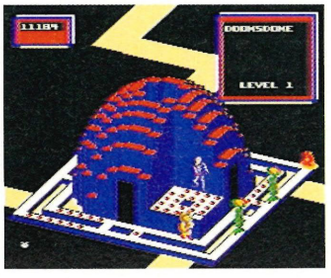
CRYSTAL CASTLES

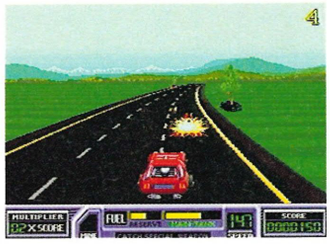
NO! What a complete and utter bag-o-brown stuff ,and that's not the brown stuff you smoke. Many people cite Crystal Castles as their favourite, or at least one of their favourite classic games. Well I've got news for those people; you're thick, you're stupid, you smell and your best friend is probably a copy of Playboy. Crystal Castles is a poor pastiche of the still-superb Pac-Man, with the only twist being the mazes are built in 3D. It sounds good, doesn't it? Well you just come down here and play it, then tell me it's good. The game is fast, but the controls are poorly thought out and the enemies look like they were designed on a chewing gum wrapper while someone was taking a dump. It has no redeeming features, and I'm about to award the lowest score I've ever given. So there.

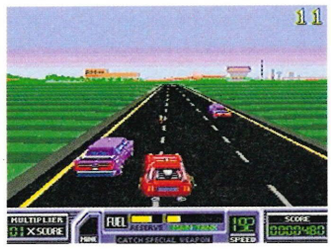
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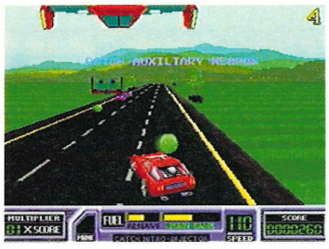






ROAD BLASTERS

Stop press! I'm just about to give a lower score than Crystal Castles! Why? Because Road Blasters is the most unplayable game I've ever played, and if I didn't have to review it, it would have got no more than 30 seconds of my time. Even though it's on a retro package, it's still an insult to the PlayStation, and I defy you to play it for more than five minutes.



The game is exactly the same as it's arcade brother, which is quite odd, because Christian, Ian and myself used to love it. We're all agreed that here it's smellier than the brown stuff that Crystal Castles omits, only Road Blasters is a classic case of silent-but-violent.

The premise is to drive a car down an extremely boring road, shoot other cars and collect fuel and the odd extra weapon to help you on your way. It can't be that bad then, can it? Oh yes. The car feels and looks as though it's driving through Godzilla's spent wad and the action is almost non-existent. It actually feels like you're just aiming a gun instead of driving a car.

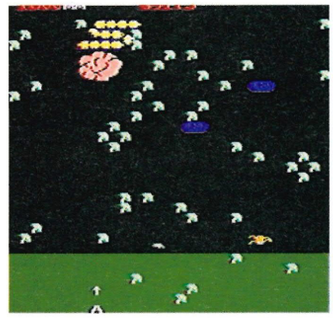
There are no, and I mean no, redeeming features to Road Blasters, and I wish Midway could have left it well alone so I could still look back on it through my rose-tinted spectacles.

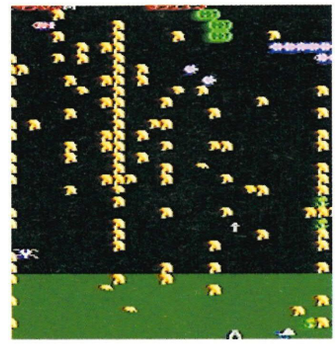
12%

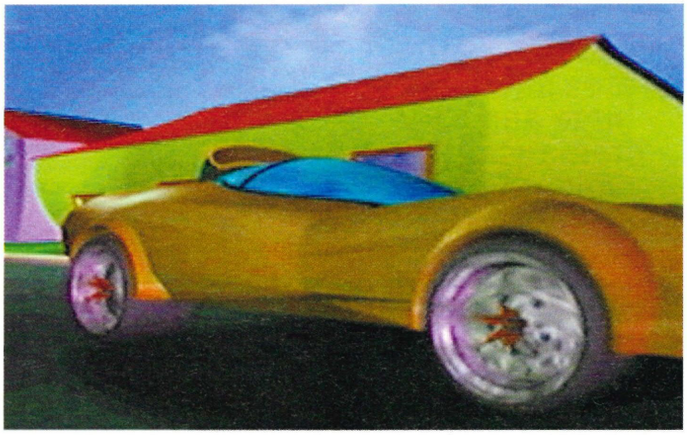
MILLIPEDE

Here's an odd one. Shoot a worm-type creature that makes its way down the screen from left to right. Hit it in the middle and it splits up and continues to do so until you finish off every last part of it. On top of this, though, there are plenty of other insect-type creatures all out to get you. And to make it even tougher, the screen is plastered with mushrooms that change the course of the millipede as it makes its way down to you. The game gets faster and faster as you get further into it, and it's actually good fun. The graphics are about as basic as they get, though, but it has the gameplay to make up for this. It's not great, but it's a worthy addition to the package.

75%







▲ The intro doesn't help matters.



▲ Neither does the gallery.

We've got a right old mixed bag here and even with the inclusion of Gauntlet and Marble Madness, which both stand the test of time, I really couldn't advise you to shell out for this package. Road Blasters and Crystal Castles are about the worst two games I have ever played. Okay, so they may be over ten years old, but who needs them now? Paperboy and Millipede are worthwhile inclusions which offer a little fun for a little while.

The publishers have got the wrong idea here. Rather than directly porting old games and sticking them onto a sub-standard package, why not update them and give us 3D Gauntlet, or rendered Marble Madness? Surely with the power of the PlayStation, worthy renditions of these already great games can be achieved. As it stands, though, only the most dedicated retro gamer will relish this and the rest of you should steer well clear.

EPM
SAUL

Second Opinion

There are some top retro titles here, but too many fillers to make it a worthy purchase. It will appeal to die-hard retro fans, but not everyone will want it - just like all retro compilations.

Mike

The Score

Publisher	GT
Developer	ATARI/MIDWAY
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£34.99
Genre	COMPILATION
Players	1-4
Memory Card	✔
Analogue	✔

GAMEPLAY
5
ORIGINALITY
0
LIFESPAN
7
SOUND
2
GRAPHICS
4
OVERALL
60%

in summary

For real retro heads only.

Blasto

Sony, go for your gun...

It may sound like the sort of shoot-'em-up we used to see on the 16-bit consoles of old, but Blasto is in fact a rather tasty 3D platformer. You assume the role of all-round American good guy Captain Blasto in his attempt to save the world from alien invasion, and while he may be a chisel-chinned babe magnet, has our Captain Blasto got what it takes to mix it with the likes of Gex 3D, Jersey Devil and Croc? Let's take a look, shall we?

The Story behind Blasto is one that you've heard a thousand times before; a super-intelligent race of aliens tried to over-run the Earth and claim the planet as there own.









▲ Sounds cool - looks like a vacuum cleaner, though.

However, in the nick of time, a superhero stepped in and saved this world of ours from their evil clutches! The aliens are banished to a placed called the 5th Dimension and this is where they have remained, until now, when they found a way to escape and relaunch their assault on Earth! So once more the scene is set for Captain Blasto, the guy who makes Roger Ramjet look decidedly weedy, to save the day! Can Blasto save the world once again? Can he toast some big time alien ass? And most importantly, can he pull himself some top tottie on the way? Of course he can, can't he?

The basic object of the game is a simple one; you must manoeuvre Captain Blasto through the huge 3D worlds, solving the puzzles, wiping out the aliens and saving the babes as he goes. No superhero would be complete without a super weapon, and Blasto is no exception. He carries his trusty hand-held laser, a rather weedy-looking device that's actually rather powerful and can be charged up as you progress through the game. When attacking with the hand laser, you have two ways to



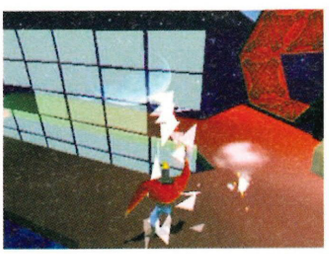




toast the alien scum. You can either tap the 'X' button for a burst of short, sharp but altogether weak laser attacks, or you can hold down the attack button for a few seconds and let Blasto charge it up! Using this method is the most effective, and can take out an alien with a single shot. However the trade-off is

> **"...The levels, or Episodes as they are called, are huge and vary dramatically as you progress through the game..."**

that you must wait for the darn thing to actually charge, which leaves you defenceless for a few seconds. However, the effects of the Blasto hand laser can be greatly improved by grabbing a few power-ups. Each time one of these useful icons is found, the damage inflicted by both the single shot and the power blast is increased. This change in power is indicated by a change in the colour of the laser itself. However beware; when Blasto loses a life, he also loses all his laser-enhancing power ups!

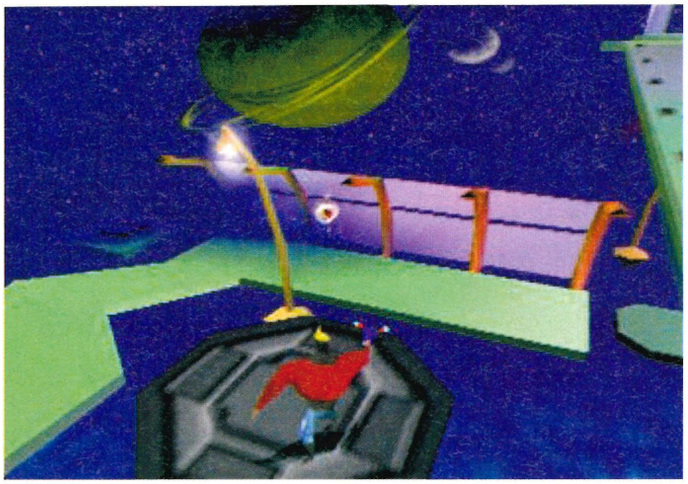






Lucious Levels

In terms of visual Blasto looks pretty much like all the other PlayStation games that fall into the rapidly-expanding genre of the 3D platformer - Gex 3D, Jersey Devil, Croc, Rascal and even Spawn all looked very similar in the way the 3D environment moves and reacts, and the overall feel is certainly similar. However, this shouldn't be taken as a criticism; in fact it's quite the opposite! All the games mentioned above looked and played really well (with the obvious exception of the terrible Spawn), and have gone a long way to proving that the Sony's 32-bit wonder is more than capable of holding its own against Nintendo and Mario 64! The levels, or Episodes as they are called, are



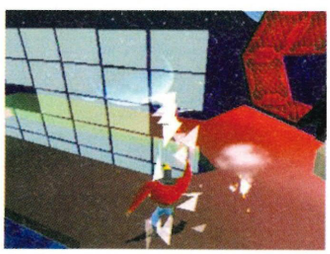


huge and vary dramatically as you progress through the game. We see our hero travel through large moonbase complexes complete with huge video walls and teleportation machines, navigate deadly lava covered planets and even pick his way through the alien's headquarters in his attempt to stop them taking over our beloved planet!

You can rotate your viewpoint through a complete 360° and also look up and down, giving you total freedom, and in fact this is pretty much essential on the latter levels as the power-ups can be hidden in some really obscure places. The aliens you come up against throughout your mission are also nicely varied though not amazing by any means. For example, on the 3rd Episode you're forced to deal with a gang of marauding spiked balls. This is quite funny, but hardly ground-breaking graphics. In addition to this little niggle, Blasto also suffers from some big-time clipping that takes place when you're standing close to an object. This is made worse when you trying to look around it, as huge section of the nearby object can suddenly disappear! I also found that 'pop up' tended to be a problem, particularly on the latter levels. It's not uncommon to have huge pieces of the scenery appearing from literally nowhere as you approach them. Of all the graphical shortcomings, this one is probably the most annoying of all as it means you can be attacked by an alien who is in the distance, but because you can't see him, you can't kill him.

"...Blasto should certainly be on the short-list for your next purchase, and if you're not then it's still well worth taking a look as it might just surprise you ..."

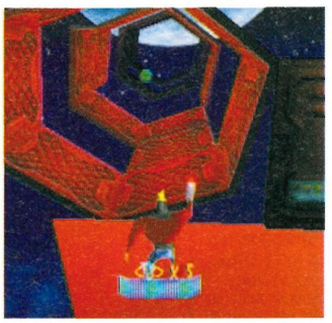
In terms of sound Blasto is quite good, or more to the point, the little bits of sound you get are quite good. A suitably cheesy sound track accompanies the proceedings, complete with fanfare and all, but the best bit is easily the phrases of speech Captain Blasto utters throughout the game. As you play, he comes out with any one of a number of comical one-liner phrases like, "ding dong, Blasto calling" and "I just love the smell of fresh ectoplasm in the morning". These help to add lots of atmosphere, not to mention humour to the proceedings!











Carrying a Heavy Load...

On the 'down' side, it has to be noted the loading time involved in the game are high, with waits of anything up to 30 seconds being the norm before a level can get under way, and this started to frustrate me after a few games. My other gripe with the game is that the action tends to be quite slow moving, and this can lead to frustration after a while - poor old Blasto seems to have has two speeds; slow, and very slow. In many cases I found myself knowing exactly where I wanted to go, what I wanted to do and how to do it - it was just a case of getting there before I nodded off! This may sound like a minor problem, but after a while it really starts to annoy you, and this is when your enthusiasm to continue playing can start to wane. The worst thing is it would have been very easy to include a button that made Blasto run rather than amble everywhere!

Don't let these minor niggles put you off what is basically a solid, fun and really entertaining 3D platformer that offers a decent challenge (which is something most games these days tend to lack), good graphics and plenty to see and do. If you're a fan of the 3D platform genre, Blasto should certainly be on the short-list for your next purchase, and if you're not then it's still well worth taking a look as it might just surprise you. Blasto has lots to offer providing you can put up with the slow-paced action - plus you get to save big-breasted birds. What more could you want?

EPM

ALAN

Second Opinion

Despite frustration creeping in at times, Blasto is a game which plays a lot better than it looks. There's enough here to keep you on the edge of your seat, and some of the humour is genuinely hilarious. It's not a classic in the Jersey Devil mould, but great fun nonetheless.

Saul

The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	SONY INTERACTIVE STUDIOS
Released	SEPTEMBER '98
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	3D PLATFORMER
Players	1
Memory Card	✔
Analogue	✔

GAMEPLAY
7

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
7

SOUND
6

GRAPHICS
8

OVERALL
80%

in summary

A good game, but it's just a shame it can be a tad annoying!

Gameplay

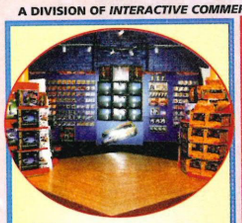
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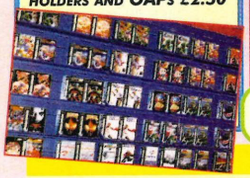
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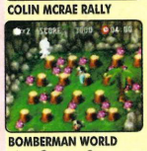
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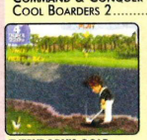


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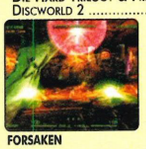


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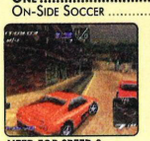


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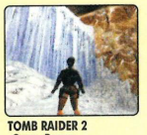
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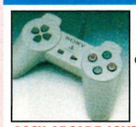
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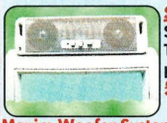
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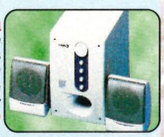
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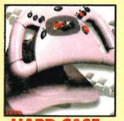


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Tombi

Funny mushrooms, evil pigs and pink hair...









What do you get if you cross a scrolling platform adventure filled with fruit to eat and bouncy platforms with a semi-naked Japanese kid with pink hair? Boredom? Quite possibly.

From the second you slam the Tombi CD into your games machine, you realise you're trapped in an disturbingly-Japanese kinda world. There are so many other games to compare this to, you lose track of the real game itself. The main character is a two-dimensional mix of Joe and Mac and a Mystical Ninja character, and at least for the first few scenarios, you're travelling round a horrifyingly mind-numbing world straight out of the SNES. The suspense whenever Tombi goes into a world that needs to be loaded makes it look like a none-too-exciting Amiga game, and you keep expecting an icon to appear to tell you to 'insert disk B'.

The plot, or, more correctly, the excuse for this strange adventure, is not too mould-breaking. Our rose-tinted hero has had his prized bracelet snatched by a vicious gang of organised pigs. How these swine managed to organise themselves is never really explained, but it does mean that the chap has to battle his way through a legion of worlds to find the porky bounders and capture them in a specially-made Evil Pig Bag. Okay, so that part is rather original. On his way he meets the usual run of stupid characters who, rather than helping on his quest, send him off on even more annoying tasks, refusing to give him what he wants until it is finally completed. These include Wise Old Men, Mentally challenged dwarves, hungry monkeys and, most repellent of all, a middle-aged midget who sends you out to get a baked yam just so she can fart in your face. It's true!

Think Pink

However, the humour in the game should give you enough of a whetted appetite to make you venture just a little further into the inanity. One of the running jokes in Tombi is the vivid colour of the adventurer's hair, showing a surprisingly ironic show of self-satirising humour which was certainly not expected on first sight of the game. Depending on your willpower, this style can mean a good hour or two's venturing, and this is when you realise there's actually more to Tombi than meets the eye. It may have seemed like a lack-lustre version of Adventure



▲ Don't ask - you really don't want to know.

island with wee-poor graphics and a theme tune that either makes you rip out every follicle on your body or simply sob into your navel, but, although it's a hard thing to admit, there's quite a cool little adventure going on underneath the surface here.

What those people at Whoopee Comp are doing here, although they may not know it, is reviving the old game format of Codemasters' legends like Dizzy and Seymour, who never quite survived the super console revolution. Arcade adventure games have since tried to ape the genre, but have never got quite as close to the infuriatingly precise puzzle-led feeling of the originals and best. Our Tombi makes his way around changing landscapes, fighting pigs and birds in an unmistakably Mario-type way, it is true, but then there are buckets to collect, fires to put out, children to find and dogs to nurse back to health. All sorts of objects are captured on your travels, and it can be a long time before you find the exact time and place to use them, and the object to use them in conjunction with.

It must never be ignored, though, that the format of this adventure is tiresomely archaic. The save option, which you seem to get every third millisecond, seriously looks like something a NES would sneer at, and, although Tombi does move three dimensionally when it suits him, there is no doubt that visually this is basically one of the worst kinds of scrolling platformers. It has also been mentioned that Tombi is not, all things being carefully considered and placed back in their box, in any way an aural delight. It cannot be stressed enough that the music that accompanies the swine-busting capers on screen is the kind of gut-wrenching tosh that makes the tootling of a Game Boy seem sophisticated in comparison. Worst of all, having practically no options in the game, you cannot turn it off, an option which is surely expected in practically any new PSX offering.

"...Tombi is an infuriatingly schizophrenic game. It can put you into hysterics with its humour, then depress you with its slow save/option modes...."

Jap Happenings

You may have gleaned by now that Tombi is an infuriatingly schizophrenic game. It can put you into hysterics with its humour, then depress you with its slow saving/option modes. It can suck you in with its puzzling plot, then repel you with its tacky music and hideous visual presentation. It's this changeability that makes it supremely difficult to either ignore, condemn or recommend. It's an extremely interesting game as far as the puzzling plot goes, but you would soon look rather foolish if you bought something that was, in essence, about five years out of date. Some may say that the 3D element to the game lifts it above it predecessors, but even that does not in any way compare to some of the stunning animation and graphics being used by other PlayStation games on the market.

In a nutshell, or at least reasonably sized suitcase, Tombi is the worst kind of early Nineties Japanese scroller bizarrely mixed with an engrossing adventure game. The kitsch and alienating Japanese style to the graphics, animation and setting don't make it a very tempting prospect for even the most desperate platform fan, but the dry sense of humour in the adaptation and he absorbing problem-solving aspect make it an almost must-see piece of software. Buy it, mildly enjoy it - and then sell it.

MIKE EPM





Second Opinion

If better executed, Tombi could be a real winner. As it stands, it hides its light under a bushel and infuriates with its dodgy execution. Not a disaster, but could do better.

Alan

The Score

Publisher	SONY CEE
Developer	WHOOPEE COMP
Released	TBA
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	3D PLATFORM ADVENTURE
Players	1
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY **9**

ORIGINALITY **3**

LIFESPAN **5**

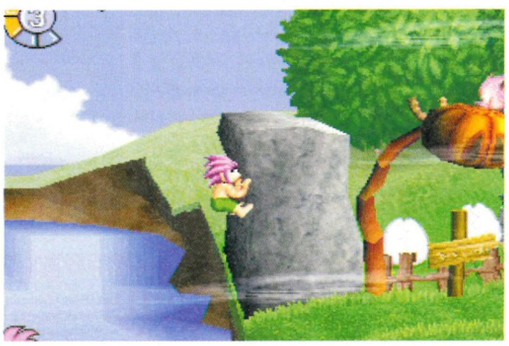
SOUND **1**

GRAPHICS **2**

OVERALL **55%**

in summary

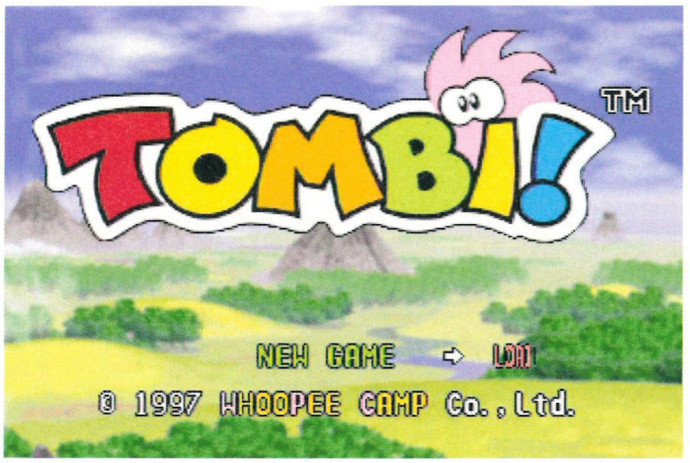
A dizzying combination of mind-numbingly badly presented old-hat tummy rubbish, and compelling puzzler.



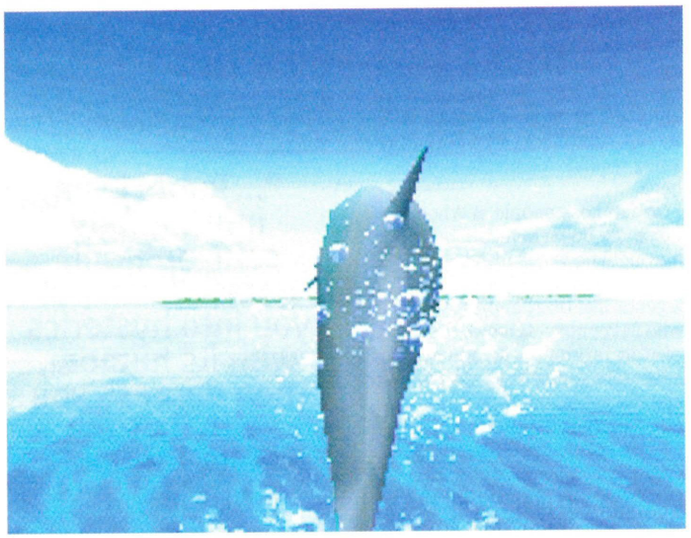


VIVE LA DIFFERENCE!

One of the most positive things about this kitsch children's adventure is the differing styles you encounter throughout. Tombi is basically your old-hat platform adventure, but when it suits the plot, it can become a miniature Zelda-style overhead adventure. You can make your way around, for instance, the Dwarves' Village in this manner, but it does stop you from jumping and running. Luckily these sections are only small. But reasonably entertaining.



Fluid

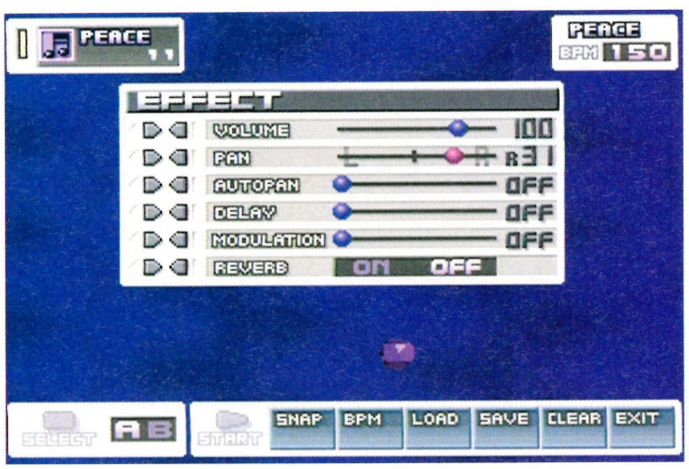


There's no doubt about it - the PlayStation is certainly a unique console, with its sleek design and technical supremacy, and I can guarantee there has never been a more unique piece of software for the machine than Fluid. Sony has combined stunning three-dimensional graphics of underwater scenes with a music sequencer! This is Ecco the Dolphin meets Spice World, and it just might capture your imagination!

If I had told my careers advisor at school that in ten years' time I would be swimming through underwater scenes as a dolphin, collecting pieces of music, I think it would have been detention for a week (and the loony bin for a year - Ed). But, that's exactly what I'm doing, and at 26, many would think I was either sad or mad! All fans of electronic music will find plenty of options and gadgetry to play around with in Sony's latest PlayStation phenomenon - Fluid.

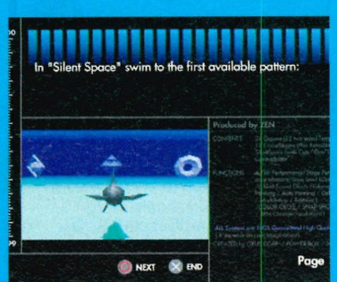
This is unlike any other 'game' that Sony has ever produced for the PlayStation. Throw away all thoughts of platforms, fighting and guns, because there are none of those in here - instead you can create musical masterpieces with

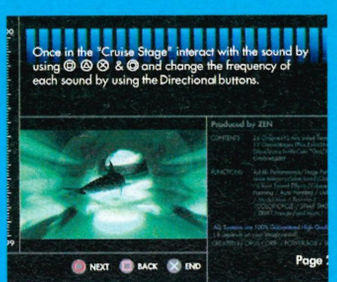
> "...There are drum patterns, bass loops, melody lines and sound effects that can all be gathered together and stored..."

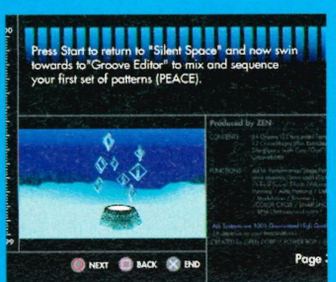


HELP IS ON HAND

As you can imagine, the Fluid 'intuitive' interface can be quite tricky to understand when you first play the game. It's for this reason that the developers have included on-screen help files to ease you into the world of underwater music sequencing! Here's what they have to say...









FEATURES LIST

Sony claims that Fluid has an impressive list of features for all budding Adamskis to play with. Here are the ones we could find...

- Ad lib performances
- Stage perform once a tune is saved in memory
- Six sound effects-

Volume
Panning
Auto panning
Delay
Modulation
Reverb

- Colour cycle
- Snap shot
- BPM change

nothing but a flick of a dolphin's fins and an ear for a good rhythm.

Fin Fun!

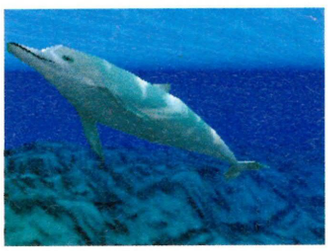
So how does Fluid work then? Well, you start off with a 'behind the tail' view of a dolphin swimming deep under water. I don't know if the dolphin has a name; I suppose it doesn't really matter, but what does matter is what you can find in this underwater wonderland. All kinds of geometric shapes spin on the spot among the coral and rocky outcrops. Most of these seem to be completely meaningless, but some - the brighter-coloured ones- whisk Mr Dolphin off to a different underwater themed area when touched. The first such area is known as 'Peace' - yes, this game has a heavy hippie influence!

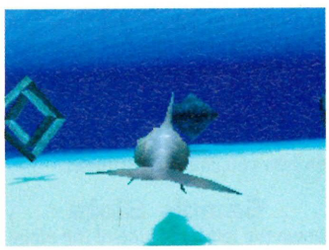
It's in these themed environments that the dolphin gets to pick up samples of music. There are drum patterns, bass loops, melody lines and sound effects that can all be gathered together and stored. You don't get to hear them straight away; you only get to hear the ambient music that plays constantly in the background. To hear your samples you must first get your dolphin to the 'Interactive Sound Lab', and then you can tinker with your findings.

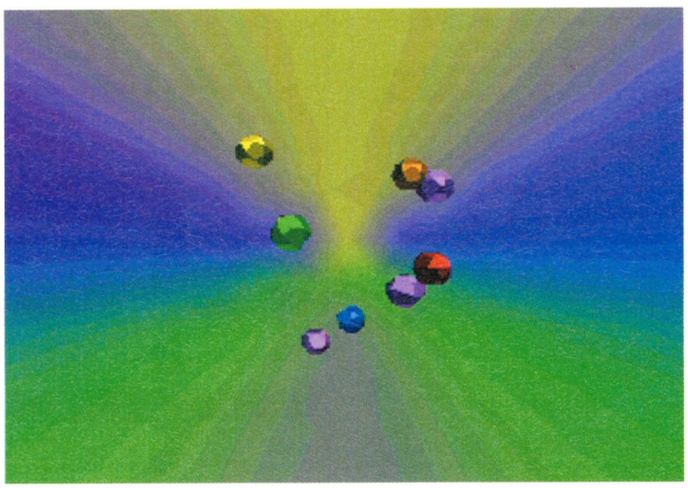
"...There are many different music styles to discover and play, from techno to jungle, acid jazz to ambient..."

Once you have exhausted all the samples in the themed area, pressing the Start button exits, taking you back to the main water area. Time to explore again, searching for a small coloured stone on the seabed - this is the Interactive Sound Lab. As you search the water you can do all kinds of dolphin tricks with the correct joypad combination, such as jumping out of the water into the bright sunshine and spinning while zipping along are particular favourites.

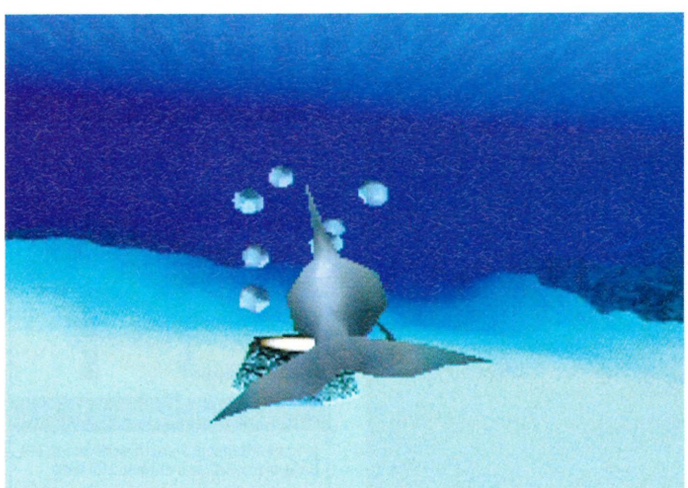




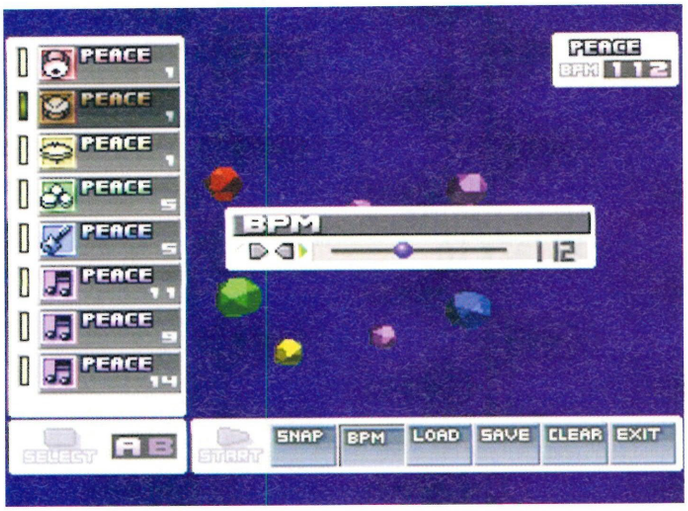












Once you are in the sound lab, the game (if you can call it a game) cuts from the glorious underwater graphics in to quite dull-looking music sequencer interface. The only graphically pleasing part of this is the way polygon balls rotate in the background. These dart and move around in different ways, depending on how you change the music.

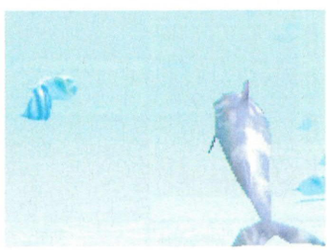
Sample Slots

Down the left-hand side of the main sequencer screen are the kinds of samples available to you - bass drum, snare, hi-hats, bass and melodies. Pressing X on any of these gives you the option of changing the sample or adding sound effects to it. Changing the sample brings up another window where different patterns and melodies of the same sound can be selected. The sound effects are things like beats per minute, panning and adding reverb.

It's by playing around with the different samples, adding new sequences in, changing the volume and effects on each track and mixing them all together that you come up with your own unique music track. There are many different music styles to discover and play, from techno to jungle, acid jazz to ambient. Okay, so there's no classical or country, but the sort of people who like that music probably don't own a PlayStation anyway! And that's about all there is to Fluid...

With the perfect track created you can lose all the windows and sit back to enjoy a dancing polygon ball show that pulsates to your groove! Then, when you're fed up with all the samples you have collected, you can cut back into the underwater area and search for more samples! There are over 600 samples hiding in the murky depths with 12 themed environments to discover and swim around. There are even hidden worlds tucked away for those who really love the life of a boombastic dolphin!

> **"...All this is very clever and spacey, but all the time you're swimming around the almost deserted depths you can't help thinking you're wasting your life playing such a dull game..."**





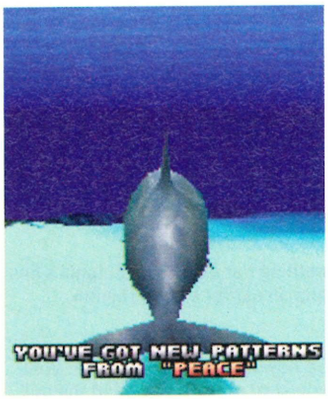
And The Verdict?

All this is very clever and spacey, but all the time you're swimming around the almost deserted depths you can't help thinking you're wasting your life playing such a dull game. I'm a real electronic music fan, but I must say that I found many of the samples you can pick up uninspiring, with many of them sounding strikingly similar. The interface itself is a bit too clunky - you find yourself pressing the wrong buttons time and time again as you attempt to negotiate the different windows to get your desired sound. And even if you can put up with Fluid's frustrations long enough to develop a half-decent tune, you are suddenly struck down with one thought - what's the point? All you can do is save your creation to a memory card and load it back in to impress your mates - and they will more than likely lamp you one and put Tekken 3 in the PlayStation instead!

If you want a music sequencer you buy a PC and a keyboard - it's as simple as that. Let's keep our trusty PlayStations for playing games and leave the music to the big boys!

DOUG EPM





Second Opinion

It's good to see developers trying to do something different with the PlayStation, but Fluid takes it in directions it really didn't need to go. It's too simplistic to be a serious music machine and too shallow to be much of a game.

Ian

The Score

Publisher	SONY CEE
Developer	SONY JAPAN
Released	AUGUST
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	MUSIC SEQUENCER
Players	1
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY **2**

ORIGINALITY **8**

LIFESPAN **3**

SOUND **7**

GRAPHICS **7**

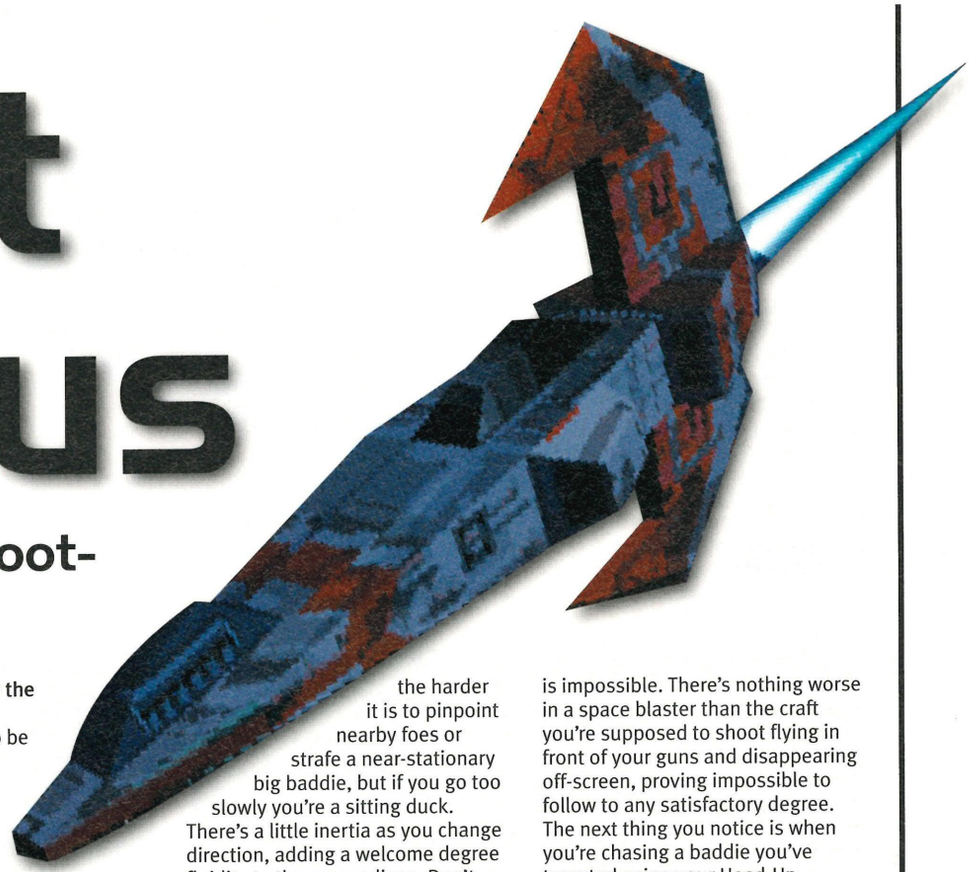
OVERALL **54%**

in summary

A brave attempt at something different, but too dull to keep your attention for long.

Blast Radius

Colony Wars for shoot-'em-up fans

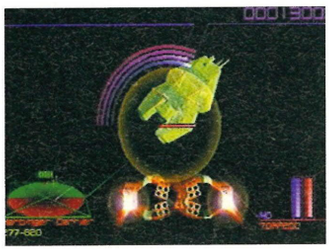


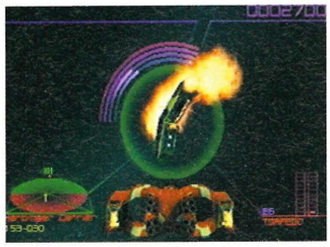
It may look similar, but Psygnosis' Blast Radius is not a sequel to Colony Wars, nor even a follow-up. That will come soon, but Blast Radius is a game in its own right, a devastating blaster without the strategic elements of Colony Wars but with the fast-firing, guns-blazing shoot-'em-up action beefed up to the max.

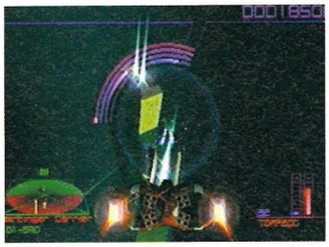
Don't expect it to be easy, though. Blast Radius is a sophisticated but unapologetic blaster, in which the player enjoys all the controls and challenges you would expect in a space shooter. Gravity is irrelevant (of course), so the terms 'up' and 'down' are relative to your own position. You steer your ship with the D-Pad (or Analogue stick, which works brilliantly) in traditional 'Up climbs, Down dives' flight sim fashion, with the upper shoulder buttons rolling your craft. Needless to say, you can set the speed too - the faster you go the harder it is to pinpoint nearby foes or strafe a near-stationary big baddie, but if you go too slowly you're a sitting duck. There's a little inertia as you change direction, adding a welcome degree fluidity to the proceedings. Don't neglect the Turbo Speed either - it drinks fuel, but with a little practice you wonder how you could ever get by without it.

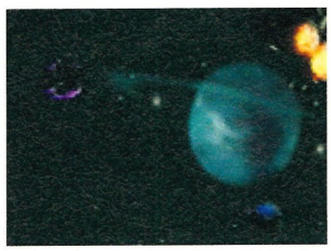
When chasing an enemy, the first thing you notice is they fly in intelligent patterns, making it possible (and indeed essential) to get on their tails and give chase. They don't make this easy for you, but neither to they duck and weave in such a way that true dogfighting is impossible. There's nothing worse in a space blaster than the craft you're supposed to shoot flying in front of your guns and disappearing off-screen, proving impossible to follow to any satisfactory degree. The next thing you notice is when you're chasing a baddie you've targeted using your Head-Up Display, the foe in question displays an energy bar showing how much damage you've done. This is a great idea, allowing you to target already-damaged craft as a priority and introducing a nail-biting element of immediacy; It's far more thrilling to

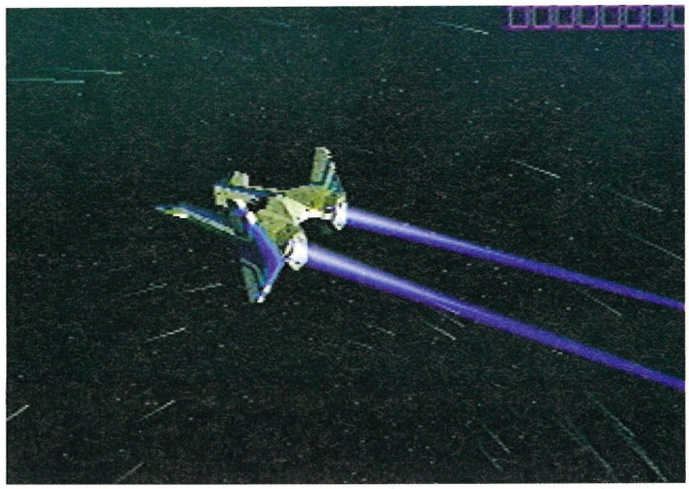
"...When chasing an enemy, the first thing you notice is that they fly in intelligent patterns, making it possible to get on their tail and give chase...."

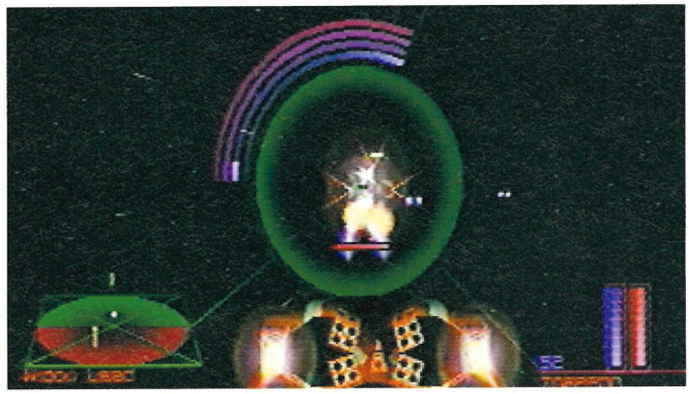










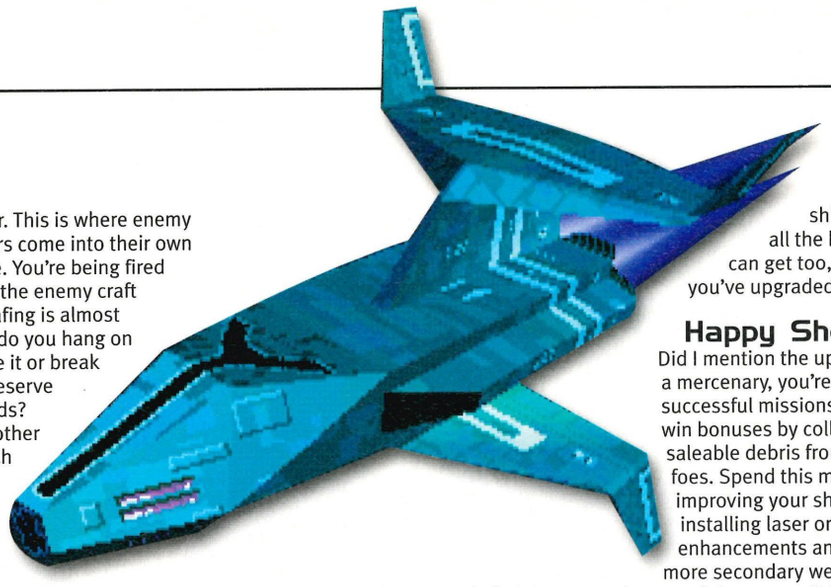


▲ Enemy craft have their own energy bar, so you can see how much damage you're doing.

hammer a ship you know is about to blow, the visible damage indication giving a sense of urgency denied by games which force you to plod on blindly. Targeted ships also offer a small triangle on the HUD indicating their direction, again making dogfighting easier.

Vacuum Clean-Up

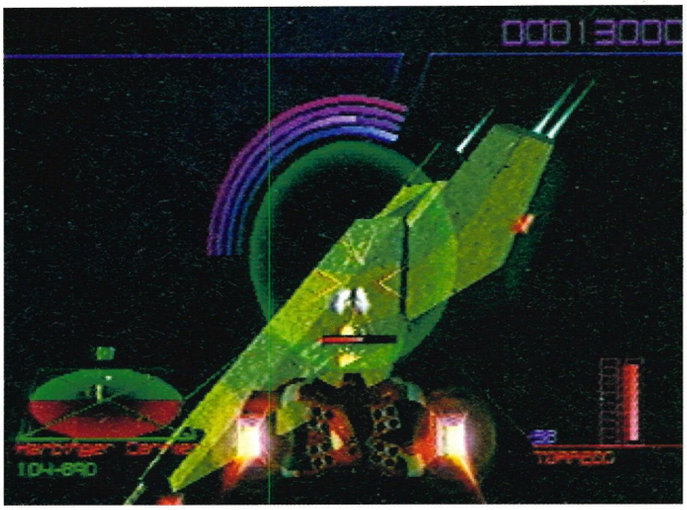
Although an unashamed shooter, Blast Radius demands intelligent flying. If your primary target is a near-static mothership, by all means take pot-shots at it throughout the mission, but don't ignore its fighter cover. As soon as you're under attack yourself, break off, perform some nifty evasive stunts and plaster the fighters which are giving you grief before turning your attentions back to the big bugger. This is where enemy energy bars come into their own once more. You're being fired upon, but the enemy craft you're strafing is almost finished - do you hang on and topple it or break off and preserve your shields? This is another boon which would be denied were you firing blind.

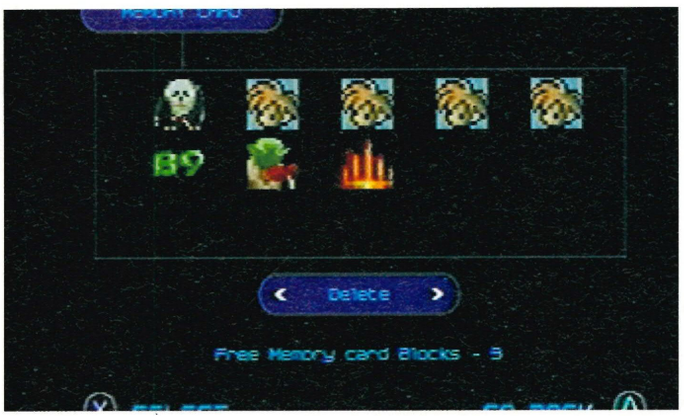


Another reason to go for the small ships is that when a craft is atomised it leaves behind its Energy Core, which you can pick up. These are the inevitable power-ups, offering fuel, shields, ammo or money. To collect, simply fly into them, but make sure your ship and not your HUD centres on the pick-up. Ignore them and you probably run out of fuel during the mission, and as the game progresses and the enemy gets more dangerous, your shields need all the help they can get too, even if you've upgraded them.

Happy Shopper

Did I mention the upgrades? As a mercenary, you're paid for successful missions and can win bonuses by collecting saleable debris from fallen foes. Spend this money on improving your ship by installing laser or shield enhancements and adding more secondary weapons. This is essential - you won't last long if you stick to your Basic Laser and Torpedo set-up, even though the Torpedo power can be built R-Type-style, by holding the primary and secondary weapons buttons together. A fully-powered shot is a





You can even manage your memory card from within the game.

OFFENCE AND DEFENCE

Aside from your basic (but upgradable) laser, there are several weapons which become available to buy during the game.



Torpedo
Your basic secondary weapon. Its shots can be 'charged' by holding the primary and secondary weapon fire buttons.



Laser Upgrade 1
Improves the power of your basic laser.



Laser Upgrade 2
Improves your laser power still further.



Shield Upgrade 1
Increases your shield protection.



Shield Upgrade 2
You can probably guess what this does...



Assault Rockets
Fast but unguided, they're great against speedy foes.



Homing Missiles
Fire and forget - a useful tool against all enemies.



ECMs
Great for deflecting enemy shots when pursued.



ETD Mines
It's a mine - there are better things to spend your money on.



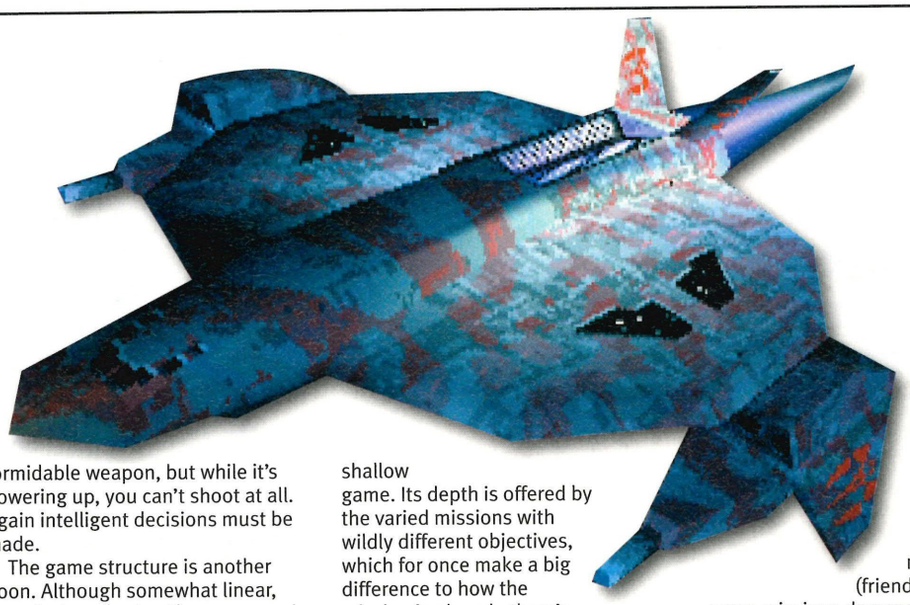
Lock-On Laser
Makes blasting the baddies a whole lot easier.



Cluster Bombs
Great for firing into groups of enemy ships.



Nukes
Outrageously powerful, but excruciatingly expensive.

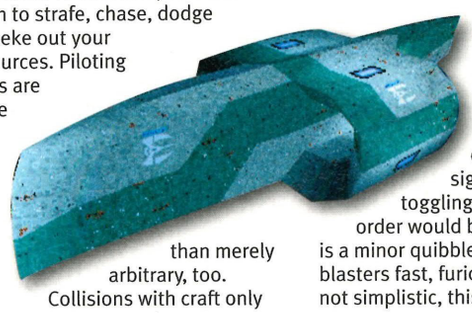


formidable weapon, but while it's powering up, you can't shoot at all. Again intelligent decisions must be made.

The game structure is another boon. Although somewhat linear, the missions (40 in all) are grouped in sets of four. Tackle the first to open the next three. Complete them to finish the sector - only then can you save your game, which is a little annoying at first, but what the hey.

Deep Space Fine...

Only shallow people consider this a shallow game. Its depth is offered by the varied missions with wildly different objectives, which for once make a big difference to how the mission is played - there's more to this game than blasting everything in sight, and mission variations are more than just graphical. To succeed you must learn to strafe, chase, dodge and eke out your resources. Piloting skills are more than merely arbitrary, too.

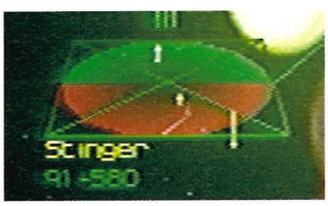


Collisions with craft only as large as your own do your shields no good without being terminal, but prang a big mothership (friendly or hostile - some missions demand you protect a craft instead of trashing it), and you're finished.

Blast Radius is an excellent thinking person's shoot-'em-up, with no really significant flaws. A button combination that targeted the enemy in your sights instead of toggling through them in order would be a boon, but this is a minor quibble. If you like your blasters fast, furious but definitely not simplistic, this is the game for you.

IAN EPM

RADICAL RADARS



Fans of that old war-horse Elite will be familiar with the radar system. Your radar-visible area is represented as a tilted circle - your craft is at the centre, with the green radar section in being front of you and the red one behind. Enemy ships are shown on 'stalks' extending upwards and downwards from the aforementioned circle. The further up or down this stalk extends, the higher or lower the enemy craft in respect to your own position. Clear as mud? Don't worry, it becomes instinctive almost immediately.



Collect Energy Cores to power up. This one gives fuel...

SHIP-SHAPE...

There are four ships to choose from at the start of the game, which all have their strengths and weaknesses without going to unusable extremes. They can be enhanced later.



Starski Gruv-77
A great all-round ship, ideal for beginners.



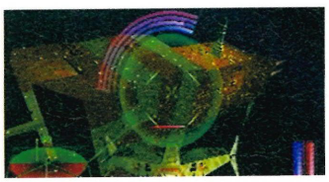
C3 Couger
Fast and manoeuvrable, but not too strong.



Hammerhead S6
Emphasises strength over stealth.



Stealthshadow
A speedy craft, but not a slogger.



Second Opinion

What a superb game. Psygnosis have avoided any strategy pretensions and gone for an all-out (though intelligent) shoot-'em-up, and it works. An essential purchase for dogfight fans and those who like their blasters a little more cerebral.

Mike

The Score

Publisher	PSYGNOSIS
Developer	PSYGNOSIS
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	SHOOT-'EM-UP
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔
Analogue	✔

GAMEPLAY
9

ORIGINALITY
4

LIFESPAN
8

SOUND
8

GRAPHICS
9

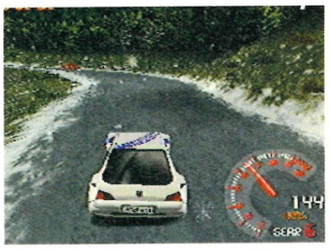
OVERALL
91%

in summary

An excellent thinking players' shoot-'em-up.

V-Rally

Before Colin McRae there was...





Don't even think of losing your concentration when behind the wheel of a V-Rally vehicle. The cars are deceptively easy to control, especially when the skill level is set to Rookie, but make one mistake and you're in a flat spin or even upside down. This isn't one of those sissy rally games where the corners are bordered with barriers you can scrape with near impunity - stray too far off the course (which isn't very far at all) and you hit a roadside rock or a trackside tree, sending your car careering out of control and destroying your lap time and race position.

To win in V-Rally you have to think like a driver. Listen to your co-pilot and follow his cornering instructions. Relax the throttle as you hit a sharp bend, hit the brakes before an even sharper one, though you can often minimise or even eliminate braking by approaching the bend on the racing line. You also have to plan ahead when overtaking the three opponents you face on each stage. Driving into the back of them and forcing your way through might work in lesser games, but not here. Battering your way through the pack regardless of where you are or how the road lies ends in disaster; you're forced off the track and into a tree. Instead you must pick your spot and go for it when the way forward is clear. You're allowed considerable contact - this is a rally game, not a Grand Prix - but don't expect to plough through other vehicles as if your own was ten times heavier.

On The Right Track

Don't expect to complete it in an afternoon either. In Arcade Mode (reach the checkpoint before the timer runs out or it's 'game over'), there are three rallies to tackle, Easy (four stages), Medium (six) and Hard (eight). Go for a complete championship and you get to compete in eight countries, each offering three-stage rallies. In all, there are around 40 tracks, spread across many different terrains such as mountainous Alps, African jungles, English plains and Indonesian rainforests. Weather conditions also vary - driving in the rain or at night can be really eerie.

Attention to detail is evident throughout. As you advance, courses become progressively more difficult in a challenging rather than frustrating way - the difficulty isn't set by boosting opponent's speed or making the roads slippier, avoiding the lazy trap into which poor driving games fall. The arrows indicating a corner are well placed too, appearing at just the right time (unless you're restarting after a crash, in which case they're confusingly early), and aren't deposited on the horizon, blocking your view of the corner they're warning you about.

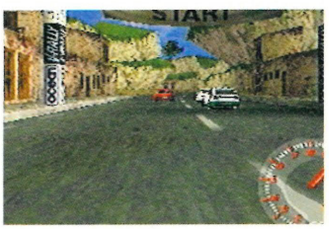
There are a couple of niggles with V-Rally. The start is pretty poor - just hold your accelerator throughout the count. It's annoying that each time you start a new game it gives you the in-car perspective too, forcing you to switch to the external view during the countdown. Why not offer 'Change Perspective' as a pre-game option?

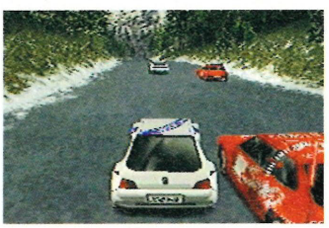
Of course, what you really want to know is whether V-Rally is better than Tommi Mäkinen or Colin McRae. Well, it drips hot oil all over the terrible Tommi (shame on the magazine that gave this 90%), but on a technical level, it shows its age next to Colin McRae. This doesn't stop it being a rave racer in its own right, though, and let's face it - it's only half the price of the Codemasters classic. In fact, thanks to V-Rally's more arcadey approach, it's arguably worth buying both.

IAN EPM



For the record, the arrow means turn a corner, not turn over.







The Score

Publisher	INFOGRAMES
Developer	INFOGRAMES
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£19.99
Genre	DRIVING
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔
Analogue	✔
Steering Wheel	✔
NegCon	✔

GAMEPLAY
9

ORIGINALITY
6

LIFESPAN
8

SOUND
7

GRAPHICS
8

OVERALL
89%

in summary

Stood the test of time very well.

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MORTAL KOMBAT 4

Midway wins...

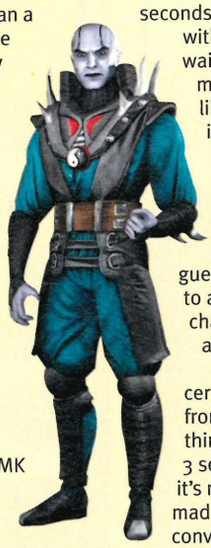


Mortal Kombat 4 is one of the most eagerly-awaited sequels of recent times, and finally it's here in all its full 3D glory. So was it worth the wait?

The Mortal Kombat series is a true videogame phenomenon. Since Midway released the original on an unsuspecting world, MK has remained a talk point for gamers everywhere, always attracting controversy and comment. However, as the number of sequels began to pile up - MK 2, MK3, Ultimate MK 3, Mortal Kombat Trilogy, the list seems endless - the quality of the game itself began to fall. Most gamers would agree the series peaked at Mortal Kombat 2. This version ironed out the problems of the first game while staying true to the formula that made it popular. However, by the time MK Trilogy was released the whole thing was wearing very thin. Mortal Kombat needed a boost, something to re-light the fire of the gaming world, and this boost was always going to come from going 3D; and finally it's happened. So has MK 4 it saved the series? The answer, I'm pleased to say, is undoubtedly 'yes'!



Anyone who has seen the arcade version of MK 4 already knows what to expect as the PlayStation version is pretty much a perfect conversion, and for this feat alone congratulations must go to Eurocom who are responsible for it. Many said the PlayStation could not cope with the complex 3D graphics, made possible by Midways all-new Zues-chip and hardware that make MK 4 what it is - well Eurocom proved them all wrong. Other than a slightly grainy edge to the fighters, you could easily be forgiven for thinking you're actually playing the arcade original. The sound is also pretty-much spot on, and easily recreates the mood and atmosphere of its arcade parent, although this is a CD game so this is only to be expected.



Arcade Perfect?

In addition to these cosmetic qualities, the PlayStation version of MK 4 also features all the 15 basic characters of the arcade machine. Each character has two basic fatalities, plus a Prison Stage fatality and the all-new Goro's Lair fatality - just like revision 3.0 in the arcades! On top of the 15 basic characters, you've also got three hidden kombatants to uncover (after all, Mortal Kombat just wouldn't be the same without a few hidden characters, would it?). These are the infamous Noob Saibot, who returns to the fray once again, an all-new character called Meat and finally the one that everyone was hoping for; Goro, who makes his return in awesome 3D!

However, all this quality comes at a price, namely poor loading times. All the previous Mortal Kombat games on the Sony PlayStation have suffered from this problem, and I'm afraid to say MK 4 is no exception. A wait of around to 30 seconds accompanies most fights, with more time wasted when waiting for title screens, match-up screens and the like to load up. Although this is always going to be a problem when converting a game with the stunning visuals and sheer amount of information that MK 4 has, and as such I guess that this can be excused to a degree, it still doesn't change the fact that it's bloody annoying!

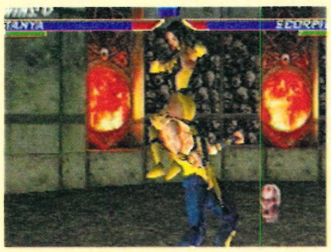
All in all, Mortal Kombat 4 certainly saves the MK series from obscurity, as the way things were going with the MK 3 sequels it was quickly losing it's mystique. Eurocom have made an excellent job of converting the game and have managed to include everything that made the arcade game so good, and have even added a few things on top! It would have to be said that the beat-'em-up market is a very cluttered one on the PlayStation, but MK 4 has more than enough going for it to easily hold its own. It may not be able to match up the mighty Tekken 3, but for great laugh and some excellent 3D fatalities, it cannot be beat. Well worth a look.

ALAN EPM













Second Opinion

It's great to see Midway take the Mortal Kombat series a stage further instead of just upping the blood and gore. Great!

Ian

The Score

Publisher	MIDWAY
Developer	EUROCOM
Released	OUT NOW (IMPORT)
Version	USA
Price	£60-70 (MAY VARY)
Genre	BEAT-'EM-UP
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY **8**

ORIGINALITY **6**

LIFESPAN **8**

SOUND **7**

GRAPHICS **9**

OVERALL **89%**

in summary

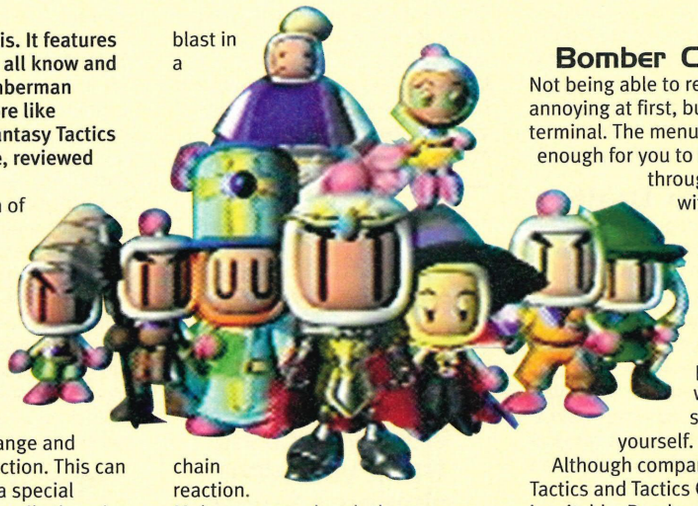
An excellent conversion of the best Mortal Kombat game ever!

BOMBERMAN WARS

More explosive than ten pints and a curry...

Interesting one, this. It features the characters we all know and love from the Bomberman games, but plays more like SquareSoft's Final Fantasy Tactics or Atlus' Tactics Ogre, reviewed over the page.

You control a team of Bombermen, with who you fight out your battles on an isometrically-displayed terrain. The combat is turns-based - each turn you get to move your men within their limited range and carry out one other action. This can be to use an item or a special ability, but is more usually throwing a bomb. This too has limited range - pick the bomb-throwing option and targetable squares are highlighted. Thrown bombs offer a counter, which counts down every turn - when it reaches zero, it blows, killing or at least wounding anything nearby and setting off nearby bombs caught up in the blast in a chain reaction.



Make sure your bomb-throwers are out of the way.

As soon as you start, you face a lizard-like foe. He's not too tough - trap him with bombs then retreat, watching as he's blown to buggery. During a computer graphics cut scene your knight is made king, and the game starts proper. From your castle in the centre of the world map you can save the game, swap party members and upgrade your goodies in the shop. You can also embark on a short tutorial, but there isn't much point unless you can read Japanese.

Outside the castle you must fight your way through several sectors, increasing your territory and confounding your foes. Have you got the blasting power to pull it off?





▲ Surround your foe with bombs leaving him unable to move.

Bomber Command

Not being able to read Japanese is annoying at first, but by no means terminal. The menus are instinctive enough for you to make your way through the game without actually reading them, and though you can never really get the very most out of the game by playing it this way, this doesn't stop you enjoying yourself.

Although comparisons with FF Tactics and Tactics Ogre are inevitable, Bomberman Wars is very different in one key respect. In the aforementioned games, it's always worth taking a pop at the enemy, no matter how unlikely you are to score a hit. In Tactics Ogre, for example, it's entirely possible to throw a missile weapon outside your effective range or through terrain which make a hit unlikely; you just have little chance of success. It's still worth a shot - you never know, you might just get lucky. In Bomberman Wars, this tactic is disastrous. You must be very careful not to throw your bomb too soon, missing the target and cluttering the battlefield with explosives. Instead, get your team into position and trap an opponent, making it impossible for him to escape - just like arcade-style Bomberman games. In turn, this affects just about everything - where you move, how you advance, your rank order - everything.

The differing nature of the game inspires a keen exercise in lateral thinking, and makes Bomberman Wars a worthy addition to Hudson's Bomberman stable, despite its rather 16-bit graphics. Fingers crossed - let's hope it's released over here so we can actually read the menus.

IAN EPM



Second Opinion

Top explosive action from Bomberman. It gets repetitive after a while, but the tactics required to beat your opponents make it ideal for those who've already beaten Final Fantasy Tactics.

Doug

The Score

Publisher	HUDSON
Developer	HUDSONSOFT
Released	OUT NOW (IMPORT)
Version	JAPANESE
Price	£60-70 (MAY VARY)
Genre	RPG
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY
8

ORIGINALITY
5

LIFESPAN
7

SOUND
6

GRAPHICS
7

OVERALL
78%

in summary

A new twist on the FF Tactics/Tactics Ogre theme.

TACTICS OGRE

Let us cling together...

This is the story of an epic struggle between good and evil, a story of a land torn apart by a raging war, a tale of warriors, wizards and a handful of brave heroes intent on settling an old score. With over 100 hours of gameplay, 8 possible endings, a non-linear story line and loads of secrets, this is Tactics Ogre!

Tactics Ogre was released in Japan a couple of year back on the Super Nintendo, but due to internal company problems the game was never released in Europe or the United States. However, nearly three years later, Atlus have converted the game to the PlayStation and unleashed the game on American RPG fans. So was it worth the wait? Read on and all will be revealed...

Anyone who has played an RPG before will be at home with Tactics Ogre. The viewpoint is an 3D isometric affair that is pretty much the standard for games in this genre. In fact, this was the same view adopted by Square for the extremely popular Final Fantasy Tactics.

Before you get a quest under way it's a good idea to check out the tutorial. Here you're talked through the basics of the game and given tips on how to perform tasks like fighting, powering up spells and the like. It may be a little slow-moving, but unless you're an absolute RPG veteran who knows how it all works, this little visit to 'school' is a God-send, and it means once the game 'proper' gets going you have at least some idea of what's going on!

Forward to Death...

Once you've had enough of the tutorial, it's time to begin a game for real. Here your first task is to choose yourself a group of characters. This means selecting a party who complement each others' strengths and weaknesses to the best effect. You construct your mini-army by choosing characters from a number of different classes, so get a variation or you find yourself limited in options latter on in the game. With this done, it's time to get the game under way.

The first thing you notice when you start to play is the graphics, and how 16-bit they look - in fact, if you hid your PlayStation from view, closed your eyes and forgot all about the Spice Girls (chance would be a fine thing), you could easily be forgiven for thinking it was 1995 and you were playing a Super Nintendo! This criticism is well founded as, basically, that's exactly what you are playing; Tactics Ogre is a SNES game on a PlayStation CD. This means that you've got things like sprites (not a single polygon in sight), dodgy animation, lots of large boarders and even crap colour blends! Now while these graphics may have been cutting edge in the days of the Super Nintendo, it's got

> **"...The first thing you notice is the graphics, and how 16-bit they look. If you hid your PlayStation from view, you could think you were playing a Super Nintendo..."**

to be said they look terrible by the standard set by games today. Things we've come to expect form PlayStation games are no where to be found. Horror or horrors, you won't even fine a single clip of FMV in the entire game - who'd have thought that could happen on a PlayStation title?

This 16-bit feel is also mirrored in the sound, which is equally low-tech. Sound effects are limited to the odd grunt or scream every so often, and to be honest they sounds as thought they've been produced with midi player! However, Atlus have made use of the CD format by adding some epic battle themes that help to improve the atmosphere of the game greatly, and these are of the high quality we've come to expect. Although adding quality CD music to a game that's so obviously 16-bit is kinda like dumping your girlfriend after she's just got off with your best mate, but at least it shows a willingness to improve the game somewhat on Atlus part.

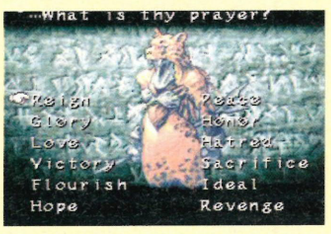
Roll the Bones...

However any real RPG fan will tell you that state-of-the-art graphics, high-quality soundtracks, flashy intros and FMV cut scenes play second fiddle to a quality storyline, an absorbing plot and a real challenge- and in all these areas Tactics Ogre is a winner. As you play through the game you find yourself drawn into the fantasy world more and more with each battle you fight. As your team gets stronger and you venture deeper into the quest and as the plot thickens, you find

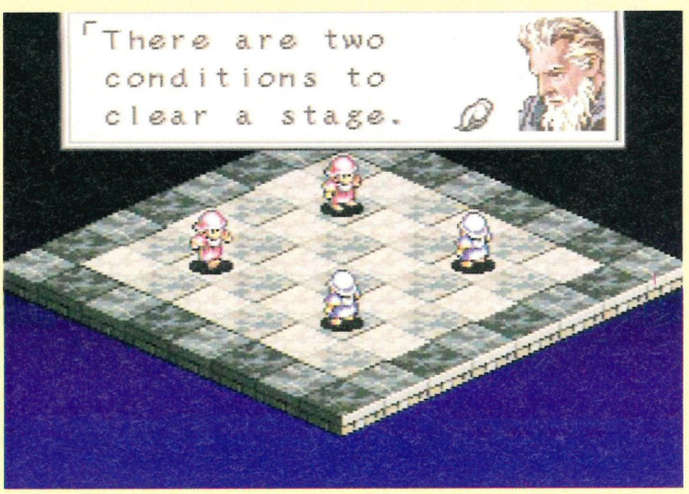










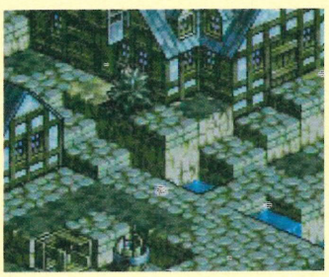


▲ The tutorial's a real boon for beginners.













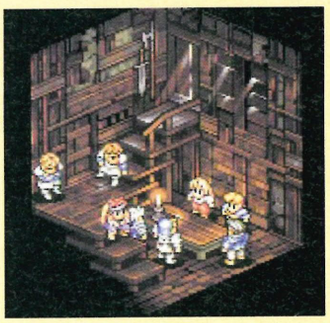


putting your joypad down and returning to the real world becomes harder and harder. Tactics Ogre may not be as advanced, good-looking or even as easy to play as the recently released Final Fantasy Tactics, but in terms of character development and storyline, this title is actually better!

"...Tactics Ogre may not be as advanced as Final Fantasy Tactics, but the storyline is actually better..."

Having said everything, there is a simple bottom line that applies to all games in this RPG/Simulation genre; you either love or loathe them. This is the position Tactics Ogre finds itself in. If you're a fan, the fact that the graphics are basically taken directly from a Super Nintendo and are therefore very poor by PlayStation standards won't matter to you. The CD load times can be a real killer in places and the music sounds like it's been produced on a midi player, but this won't matter either, because all these cosmetic shortcomings can't change the fact that Tactics Ogre has a great plot, sound playability and a real challenge. Which, for a fan, is all that matters! However, if you tend to like a little more action in your games and an RPG is your idea of living hell, then I'd strongly recommend you give Tactics Ogre an extremely wide berth. In fact, the only way this game would be of any use to you is if you've been having problems getting to sleeping at night, 'cause I guarantee it'll have you nodding off in a matter of minutes! One for the hard-core RPG fans!

ALAN EPM



Second Opinion

Not bad, though it gets a bit samey and the tactics aren't as sophisticated as the game pretends. A reasonable RPG/Wargame.

Ian

The Score

Publisher	ATLUS
Developer	INSECT & ATLUS
Released	OUT NOW (IMPORT)
Version	USA
Price	£60-70 (MAY VARY)
Genre	RPG/SIMULATION
Players	1
Memory Card	✓

GAMEPLAY
7

ORIGINALITY
7

LIFESPAN
8

SOUND
5

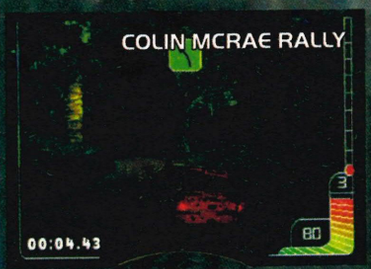
GRAPHICS
5

OVERALL
78%

in summary

If you liked Final Fantasy Tactics, Ogre Battle is right up your street. If not, forget it.

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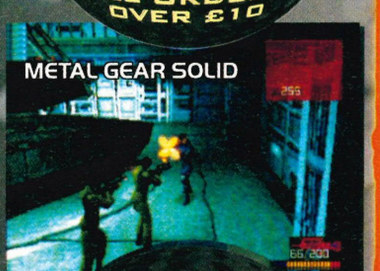
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HEAD-SCRATCHER'S HEAVEN

THERE AREN'T A HUGE NUMBER OF PUZZLE GAMES ON THE PSX, BUT THEIR QUALITY IS GENERALLY VERY HIGH. HERE'S A GUIDE TO WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT...

PAST PUZZLERS

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PUZZLE GAMES...

Despite their generally simple nature, puzzle games don't enjoy a long and glorious history on the home computers and consoles. Sure, there were Tic-Tac-Toe type-in programs on the ZX81 and the occasional slidey puzzle conversion (culminating in Domark's Split Personalities), but really the puzzle game only came into its own in 1989 with the Western release of Tetris.

As everyone who's owned a games machine for longer than a week knows, Tetris originated in Russia. Specifically, it was created in 1985 by Alexey Pajitnov, using an old mainframe without graphics and programmed in the PASCAL language. The name came from 'tetra', the Greek word for four, which is, of course, the number of squares in each Tetris shape. It took Glasnost and ten years of writs before Pajitnov was paid royalties, but by then he'd created a gaming legend.

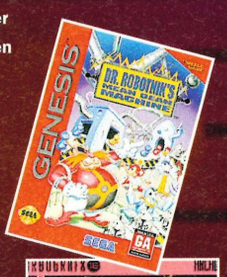
From Tetris sprang all sorts of derivatives and updates. Challenge modes were added, two-player action catered for and the basic style adapted in a number of different ways. Welltris, for example, had the player sorting shapes in limited 3D, guiding them down the walls of a square pit, fitting together on the 'floor'. Wordtris was a sort of Tetris meets Scrabble.

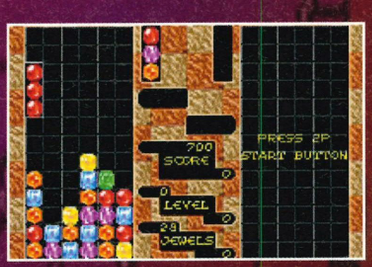
A variation on the falling shapes theme came with Klax, the Tengen coin-op brought to home machines by Domark. Here you caught coloured tiles as they fell from a conveyor belt and arranged them into patterns, scoring points. Columns, packaged with Sega's Mega Drive for a while, featured vertical columns (!) of gems of various colours. They couldn't be rotated, but you could re-arrange the order of the gems. Link similarly-coloured jewels to make them explode, causing more to fall and sometimes create other links which then exploded. It was good, but as the gems fell the player often 'achieved' a spectacular series of runs he hadn't anticipated, introducing an unacceptable degree of chance.

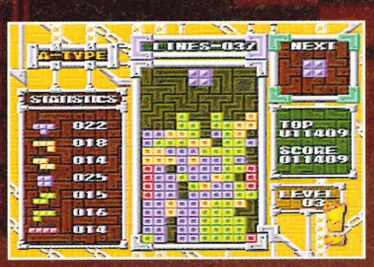
Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine took Columns a step further, but had next to nothing to do with Robotnik, Sonic's adversary. This wasn't the first time an established character was used to sell a puzzler in this way (remember Panic Dizzy?), and nor was it the last - check out the round-up for more recent examples. Dr Mario and its imitators achieved similar results, though here each 'column' was two halves of a pill, which could be rotated instead of re-ordered. As well as destroying pills by linking similar colours, you also had to get rid of viruses, which were basically half-pills already on the screen when you started.

To prove that not every puzzler owes its origins to Tetris, Lemmings and Worms took the 16-bit world by storm. Lemmings saw the player guiding a group of green-haired rodents to the level exit by assigning them abilities at various points along their march, while Worms saw you taking it in turns to take pot-shots at the opposing team's army of invertebrates. Some might argue these aren't puzzlers at all, but although they push the genre into previously uncharted territory, their cerebral gameplay and use of equipment and terrain qualifies them for this feature.

So what of the future? Aside from Worms and Lemmings (both represented on the PSX), the genre hasn't really changed over the years. Perhaps it doesn't need to. More advanced machines make more complex puzzlers possible, but simplicity is the heart of the genre. Was Welltris ever as good as Tetris? The real challenge for future puzzle games is justifying the asking price - puzzlers are best suited to budget price points. After all, £40 PSX games cost ten times as much as an 8-bit budget offering. Perhaps we'll see more puzzle compilations or at least twin-packs. EPM certainly hope so!









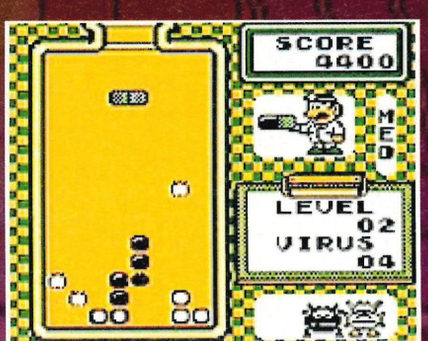


WHAT MAKES A GOOD ONE?

* Perfect Perplexity?

What separates the pristine puzzlers from the pathetic pap?

- The best puzzle games are based on the simplest of concepts. They should take seconds to learn but months to master.
- Puzzle games are generally straightforward, so developers should make sure there are enough options and variations to justify the asking price.
- While puzzlers can be fast and frantic, the emphasis should be on cerebral challenge rather than testing reflexes.



3D LEMMINGS

PSYGNOSIS



On the 16-bit machines, Lemmings broke the gaming mould and effectively created a new genre. Instead of blasting the snot out of aliens or skidding around corners at 120mph, Lemmings saw you saving cute little rodents who seemed hell-bent on suicide. By assigning them simple tasks, you could take them from to the level exit and victory.

The original Lemmings games were fearsomely 2D, but its first PlayStation incarnation is a 3D interpretation featuring 100 levels and nine lemming abilities. Unfortunately this doesn't quite work. The controls are awkward and the third dimension adds a level of complexity this strategic puzzler just didn't need. The heart of Lemmings is working out what to do, not the execution. Hopefully Psygnosis will treat us to a retro pack of older Lemmings marvels which, despite lacking the graphical sophistication of 3D Lemmings, boasted much better gameplay.

60%

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO

VIRGIN



Does the title of this game ring a bell? Yes - alarm bells! Games which sell by leaning on already-successful titles with which they've only cosmetic connections are usually crap. The game plays similarly to Dr Mario or Columns. Gems fall in twos; you can rotate the falling pair if you wish. A circular, Crash Gem destroys similarly-coloured Gems it touches - set up a huge chain of a single gemstone and you could make quite a bang. Land a Rainbow Gem on a stone to destroy every similarly-coloured Gem on the screen, and successful chains produce Counter Gems which fall on your opponent's screen and get in the way. When either your or your foe's Gem pile reaches the top of the screen, it's 'game over'.

All the time this is going on a couple of Street Fighter characters battle it out in the middle of the screen. The actions of the two players (human or CPU) inspire the Capcom pugilists to pull off their signature moves. This has no effect on the game (other than to make it more marketable), but as the puzzle action's so good, who cares?

92%

LOST VIKINGS 2

INTERPLAY

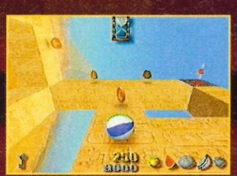


Another winner. Here you control three Vikings (one at a time) and, in a wonderfully nonsensical plot, must guide them back to the 'big shiny thing' that brought them here by taking ingredients to a witch, who then casts a teleport spell taking you to the next level. Each of the three Nordic nomads have specific abilities. One has a sword and a bionic arm - use him for the fighting. The big guy with the shield can deflect falling or firing missiles and even shrink, and the red-moustachioed geezer can jump. Their abilities can often be combined for greater effect. For example, the guy with the shield can hold it above his head while the leaper uses it as a platform. Needless to say, the heart of the game is in using their unique talents to solve various puzzles that block your way to the ingredients and the caldron exit. Bite-sized levels mean you're not put back too far if you have to re-start, and also offer the incentive to go for just one more. The graphics and presentation betray its 16-bit roots, but look at 3D Lemmings for an example of the wrong way to update a game. All in all, it's a great game which deserved better sales than it enjoyed when first released.

89%

KULA WORLD

SONY



This is one of the most difficult-to-describe games we've ever seen. Imagine a pot-full of building blocks arranged to form 3D rails. Now imagine it floating in mid-air. Now imagine guiding a beach ball over it, using all six faces of the 'blocks' as the floor, depending on the occasion. Got that? Good...

Now for the difficult part. You roll your beach ball along these floating structures (you can't fall off - after all, which way would gravity take you?), collecting gems, fruit and other such material while looking for the key to open the exit. You can jump a short distance, but don't fall to your doom or land on a spike. As the game goes on, the levels become even more brain-hurting in their straightforward complexity.

Robbed of any sense of 'up' or 'down', the player is initially confused but the patient are rewarded. The 3D game engine works like a dream, though the graphics are a little minimalistic as a trade-off. Over all, it's a great and original puzzler.

88%

BUST-A-MOVE 2

ACCLAIM



This one's more of an update than a sequel, but as the SNES original Bust-a-Move was never released on the PlayStation, this is no real problem. The game involves firing coloured balls at other coloured spheres, creating groups of similar spheres and so destroying them. It's a lot simpler than it sounds. Visually it's as good as it needs to be, but the in-game music grates after a while. The Bubble Bobble/Rainbow Islands characters are as cute as ever, though. Several modes are available, the two-player offering providing the most laughs.

While Bust-a-Move 2 is not as good as the sequel, Bust-a-Move 3, it's a lot cheaper. If you already have one of these games, it's not really worth buying the other. Neither have anything to do with Bust-a-Move: Rhythm and Dance either, which is a very different game altogether.

80%

BUST-A-MOVE 3DX

ACCLAIM



This is a sort of 'Columns-on-its-head' offering. Your character (which fans of Taito's Bubble Bobble series will recognise) controls a harpoon-type gun which fires coloured balls at the ceiling, where they stick to each other (I kid you not). Some globes are already there. On grouping three similarly-coloured balls they explode, and any spheres clinging to them and them alone also fall. The heart of the game is producing such chains. High-scoring shots inflict extra globes on your foe. If you're overwhelmed by the balls you lose, so do it to him before he does it to you.

Like most puzzlers, this one's easy to pick up and play but underneath the simplistic gameplay there's subtlety demanding tactics and forward thinking. There's also a level editor, so you need never get bored. As Saul rightly said in Issue Four, 'this is a universal game which should be played by everyone'.

86%

GRID RUN

VIRGIN



What can we say about this game that won't be totally ignored? It caused few waves when first released and is almost impossible to find now, and no one really cares about it anyway. Grid Run is basically a game of tag in a maze. It's more action-based than most puzzlers, but unless you're battling a buddy in two-player mode, it offers a great cure for insomnia after a few levels. The aim of the game is to capture a set number of flags, your opponent doing the same. If you fall behind, you're beamed away and forced to chase him. To win, you must collect the required number of flags without being caught; if your foe tags you and then completes his flag collection, you lose. Power-ups such as spells, speed and agility add interest to the proceedings, as do the bonus levels between rounds, but at the end of the day Grid Run hasn't the legs to go the distance (clichés - we avoid 'em like the plague). It's okay for a quick blast with a buddy, but boring on your own.

49%

HEBEREKE POPOITTO

SUNSOFT



Nice try, Sunsoft, but Hebereke Popoitto doesn't even graze the mustard, let alone cut it. The concept's simple enough. A wild and wacky puzzler giving the usual nod to Tetris and Columns, but it isn't as pleasing as either - it's a classic case of the game as a whole being less than the sum of its parts. Featuring eight different characters and two game modes, the idea is to link similarly-coloured faces and make them disappear. You get the picture - it's nothing you haven't seen a million times before, and usually better planned and executed.

In a nutshell, Hebereke Popoitto is a peculiarly Japanese game which won't set the UK market on fire. Or raise a spark. Or warm it up in the slightest...

34%

KURUSHI: INTELLIGENT CUBE

SONY



This is one of the few puzzlers that owes nothing to Tetris, though it does doff its cap to Klax, in concept though not in execution.

The concept is simple. A series of cubes roll down a conveyor belt Klax-style, but instead of guiding them as they fall you must prevent them from falling at all by taking a square on the floor and activating it as a cube rolls onto it. Black cubes cannot be captured, but green ones take anything in the surrounding area when they go. Allow the blocks to tumble or get crushed by one of the curious cubes and you're in trouble. Graphically, the game sucks like an industrial strength vacuum cleaner and the sound's pretty piddle poor too, but Kurushi scores where it counts - in the gameplay department. It's fearsomely original and has that 'just one more go' quality too many puzzlers lack. It lacks variety and the two-player mode is basically two single-player games which is damn-near unforgivable, but over all, Kurushi conquers.

79%

TETRIS PLUS

JALECO



Tetris. Guide and rotate the falling blocks, fitting them together as they land. Complete rows are removed and the blocks fall down - you get the picture. A few surprises have been added. For example, there's a puzzle mode where you face a professor standing on a heap of blocks. Get rid of them to make him fall, or he climbs the blocks you're dropping. If he reaches the spiked ceiling and dies, you lose. Although fun, the concept of rescuing someone hell-bent on killing himself is a little unsatisfying. You can also create your own puzzles with the level editor, play a game against a friend and even allow two players to indulge in separate games, without playing co-operatively or competitively.

Tetris Plus is great fun, but offers few surprises. Unfortunately, it's also as rare as a red tie at the Conservative Party Conference.

70%

ZOOP

VIACOM NEW MEDIA



Another game that's been around since Sir Clive was a nipper. Zoop's been released on virtually every games machine known to man, and sold - about two and a half copies. Okay, maybe that's an exaggeration, but Zoop definitely put the 'niche' in 'niche market'.

A series of coloured shapes encroach on your space, moving from the sides of the screen to the square in the centre. This is where your craft lies. You remove shapes from the board by firing at those which are the same colour. Hit one that's a different colour and it stays, but your colour changes. Come to think of it, a game like this was available on pocket calculators, using numbers rather than colours and shapes; talk about 'every games platform'...

Zoop's a neat enough idea and good for a few plays, but it doesn't hold your interest for long. There just isn't enough here to justify even budget prices, though it would be ideal for a compilation.

48%

WORMS

OCEAN (PLATINUM)



Incooommmiiinnng! Is this a puzzle or strategy game? It straddles the divide, but as Sony advertised it as a forthcoming puzzler in their 1996 catalogue, who are we to argue? As a concept, Worms couldn't be simpler. You control a team of four worms, and must battle it out with up to three other computer- or human-controlled squads. You have a variety of weapons at hand, such as bazookas which fire in an arc, rockets with a straighter flight, the short-range but high-powered Uzi and standard and cluster grenades. All weapons have their strengths and weaknesses, and you must select the right weapon for the foe in hand. Hit the enemy, or at least plant a bomb close to him, and he loses some of his 100 hits.

Worms is fun enough on your own, but when fighting human opponents it's an unbelievable blast. As you get used to the weapons, various tactics present themselves - perhaps this title does lean on the strategy side of gaming. We won't argue with Mr Sony, though. Nor will we argue with Worms.

95%

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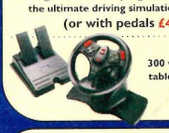


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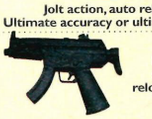


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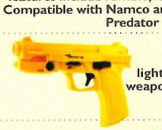




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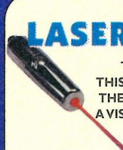
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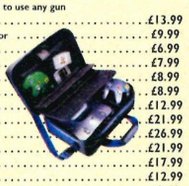
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Deathtrap Dungeon

Level Select: On the menu with the three skulls, press L1, R1, ▲, ▲, ■, ●, R1, L1. Go to Load Game to find all levels accessable.

Excalibur 2555AD

If you've read the news pages, you know our reviewing it as a forthcoming Platinum release was a mistake. It's still worth tipping, though...

Special Attacks

Spinning Slice: ✕, ▲, ●, ■
Roundhouse Swing:
✕, ■, ●, ▲

Cheats

Pause the game and press one of the following:
Max. Health:
▲, ▲, ▲, ■, ■, ■, ■, ■
Max Sword Power:
▲, ▲, ■, ■, ●, ●, ■, ■
Skip Level:
■, ●, ■, ▲, ●, ▲, ▲, ▲
Show Collision Boxes:
●, ●, ●, ●, ■, ●, ●, ■
To unpause, press Start or select Continue and press ✕. You have to restart the game after inputting every cheat, but you can pause once more and input another - just only input one at a time.

Formula 1 '97

Hidden Tracks: In Arcade Mode, come first in every race.

Cheats

In Grand Prix Mode, select your driver and edit his name to one of the following:
Four New Tracks:
BILLY BONUS
Helicopter Camera:
ZOOM LENSE
Murray & Martin Sprites:
BOX CHATTER
Music and new FX:
SWAP SHOP
Overinflated tyres:
LITTLE WEELZ
Raining Frogs:
CATS DOGS
VR Graphics:
VIRTUALLY VIRTUAL
WipEout 2097 Mode:
PI MAN

To get to Round 16 in the championship, edit your drivers name to one of the following:
2nd, 200 points:
OEAN ALESI
3rd, 200 points:
PEA ALESI
4th, 200 points:
QEAN ALESI
Last, 0 points:
NEAN ALESI



Frogger

Infinite Lives: Pause and enter ➡, ■, ▲, ■, ▲, ✕
Level Select: Pause and enter ➡, ■, ▲, ■, ▲, R1, L1, R1, L1, ●

Mortal Kombat Mythologies: Sub Zero

Crap game; use these cheats to see everything it's got to offer, then get rid of the bugger.

Cheat Passwords

Urns of Vitality: NXCVSZ
Lives: GTTBHR
Credits: CRVDTS
Fortress Stage, 20,000 exp:
ZCHRRY

Level Passwords

Wind: THWMSB
Earth: CNSZDG
Water: ZVRKDM
Fire: JYPPHD
Prison: RGTKCS
Bridge: QFTLWN

Face Chinnok

Hold L1 as you die and, if you hadn't reached a checkpoint, you restart facing Chinnok.

Treasures of the Deep

To activate the cheat mode, press ⬇, ✕, ⬅, ■, ⬆, ⬆, ▲, ▲, ➡, ➡, ●, ●. Now enter one of the following codes:

Banana Harpoons:
✕, ⬆, ▲, ⬇
Disable Currents:
R1, L1, L2, R2, ✕
Extended Shark Attack Time:
L2, L2, L2, R1, R1, R1, R2, L1
Full Map:
■, ✕, ●, ✕, ■
Full Screen Display:
▲, ✕, ⬆, ⬇
Overhead View:
▲, ■, ✕, ■
Turbo Mode:
R1, R2, R1, R2, R1, R2

Theme Hospital

Level Passcodes:

2: ✕, ●, ■, ▲, ▲, ●, ■, ✕
3: ●, ●, ▲, ■, ✕, ▲, ●, ▲
4: ■, ▲, ●, ■, ✕, ✕, ▲, ●
5: ●, ▲, ■, ●, ✕, ▲, ●, ■
6: ■, ▲, ■, ●, ✕, ■, ✕, ●
7: ■, ▲, ▲, ●, ✕, ■, ▲, ●
8: ✕, ▲, ■, ●, ▲, ●, ■, ✕
9: ▲, ■, ✕, ▲, ●, ✕, ▲, ■
10: ●, ■, ✕, ▲, ■, ✕, ●, ■
11: ▲, ●, ■, ●, ▲, ■, ●, ✕
12: ●, ■, ✕, ✕, ■, ●, ■, ▲



Dead Ball Zone

All teams and Stadiums: On the Language Select screen, highlight 'Italian' and hold L2+R1+ ⬆ + ■ for about ten seconds.



Bomberman World

Bonus Versus Stage: Enter 5656 as a password.
Bonus Battle Stage: Enter 4989 as a password.
Battle Royal Mode: Enter 1616 as a password.
Maniac Mode: Enter 4622 as a password.

Passcodes:

1-1: 8010
1-2: 1180
1-3: 8086
1-4: 2919

Lemmings 3D

Hidden Menu
At the Password Screen, enter LAMPWICK. Leave and select your difficulty level - a hidden menu is offered.

Passwords: Fun Level

2: BLIMBING
3: FANAGALO
4: DRICKSIE
5: KURTOSIS
6: GREGATIM
7: WALLAROO
8: AVENTAIL
9: GAZOGENE
10: JINGBANG
11: DIALLAGE
12: BUNODONT
13: NAINSOOK
14: YAKIMONA
15: FUMITORY
16: CINGULUM
17: BESLAVER
18: ANABLEPS
19: QUINCUNX
20: TARLATAN

Passwords: Tricky Level

2: GUMMOSIS
3: PRODNOSE
4: NGULTRUM
5: COTTABUS
6: BEDAGGLE
7: EPICALYX
8: HOMALOID
9: LALLYGAG
10: BILABIAL
11: CACOFOGO
12: METAVURT
13: SLOWBURN
14: PELLUCID
15: MAKIMONO
16: KHUSKHUS
17: DISPLODE
18: RACAHOUT
19: ORGULOUS
20: DUNCEDOM

Passwords: Taxing Level

2: GEROPIGA
3: BONTEBOK
4: EMPYREAL
5: LANGLAUF
6: NANNYGAI
7: SARATOGA
8: QUINTAIN
9: MUSQUASH
10: ZOMBORUK
11: SKILLING
12: WOBEGONE
13: BINDIEYE
14: FRAXINUS
15: LINDWORM
16: CURLICUE
17: HANEPOOR
18: IDEMQUOD
19: BLANDISH
20: MALAGASY

Passwords: Mayhem Level

2: GARGANEY
3: KAOLIANG
4: MAROCAIN
5: OBTEMPER
6: TASTEVIN
7: VELLOZIA
8: BORACHIO
9: JACKAROO
10: COOLAMON
11: BANAUSIC
12: FABURDEN
13: RECKLING
14: MIRLITON
15: OPAPANAX
16: BIMBASHI
17: CAATINGA
18: PENSTOCK
19: SPRINGAL
20: BABIRUSA

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BLAZE

Another month, another two pages packed solid with cool tips and cheats. If you're stuck in the latest shoot-'em-up or hassled by a fiendish platformer, check out this section for a useful (if unfair) helping hand. If you can't find the tip you want, check out our tips clinic over the page...

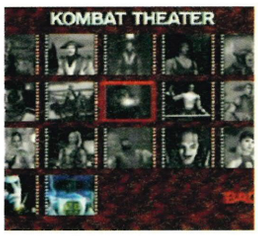
1-5: 1021
2-1: 0127
2-2: 1220
2-3: 1018
2-4: 0804
2-5: 0714
3-1: 1027
3-2: 2413
3-3: 3009
3-4: 6502
3-5: 6809
4-1: 0627
4-2: 8808
4-3: 3674
4-4: 4891
4-5: 0605
5-1: 0730
5-2: 2151
5-3: 3562
5-4: 3812
5-5: 2203

Tetris Plus

Access All Levels
Select Puzzle Mode and enter the following as a password:
Light Blue, Pink, Green, Light Blue, Pink, Green.
Stage Select should appear. You can access this screen at any time by pressing Start.

Mortal Kombat 4

These are for the American import version of the game. We haven't had time to test them all, but we hope they all work.



Play as Goro:
1: Beat the game using Shinnok.
2: Start a two-player game and highlight the hidden box at the bottom; select it with the Block button, which you should hold.
3: Move the cursor to Shinnok and select him with the Run button, which you should hold until the match starts - you're Goro.
Play as Noob Saibot:
1: Beat the game with Reiko
2: Enter a two-player vs. game. Before it loads, put in the Noob Saibot Kombat Kode (012-012).
3: Exit the fight, and in any mode go to where it says 'Hidden'.
4: Press ✖, hold Block, move ↑, then ←. You should be on Reiko, even though he's not highlighted.
5: When you get to Reiko, press ✖. Continue to hold Run and Block until the match starts with you as Noob Saibot.
View Bios:
In Kombat Theater Mode, highlight a character and press Run instead of . To see Goro's bio, highlight 'Back' and press Run.

Alternative Weapons and Costumes:
1: In any fight mode, highlight any fighter, hold Start and press ✖. The picture changes to a yin-yang then back to the character picture.
2: Release Start and select your fighter with ✖.

Rampage World Tour

Alternative colors:
Highlight George, Ralph, or Lizzy at the character selection screen. Press ↑ after selecting a character to choose a new color.

Reboot

Play as Enzo:
On the main menu, press ↑, ←, ↓, ←, ↓, L1, R1, →, ↓, →

Restore Glich Energy:
Again on the main menu, enter →, L1, ↑, →, ↓, L1, R1, ↑, ↓, ←

Shields With Every Glitch:
Once more, on the main menu enter ↓, R1, ←, →, ↓, L2, R2, ←, →, ↑.
This can't be used with the Glitch Energy cheat.

VR Powerboat Racing

Cheat Passwords:
Enter these codes as passwords to enable the cheat in question.

Large Heads: DEFORM
Large Boats: LARGE
Long Boats: LONGONE
Small Boats: COMPACT
Speed: SPEEEED
Go Faster: ZOOOOOM
Collect Turbos
Automatically: HELP.ME
Barracuda Class Catamarans: CUD
Minnow Class Catamarans: MIN
Pike Class Catamarans: IKE
Slalom Level: L.R
Mine Level: U.G
Single-Hulled Boats: PLA
Champion Edition: CUP

Auto Destruct

Pause the game and press ↑, ↓, ←, →, ↓, →, L1, R1, R1 to enable the cheat menu. You can now use the following cheats:

Blood Mode:
Pause the game and press L1, ↓, R1, ←, L1, →, R1
Immortal:
Pause the game and press ←, R1, ↑, L1, ↑, →, R1, ↓, L1
Angels:
Pause the game and press ↑, R1, ↓, L1, ↑, ←, R1, →, L1
Swarmers x5:
Pause the game and press ↑, ↓, ↑, ←, →, R1, L1, R1, L1
Double Laser:
Pause the game and press R1, L1, R1, L1, ↑, ↓, ↑, ←, →
Car Select:
Pause the game and press ←, R1, →, R1, ←, R1, →, R1
New York Time Trial Available:
Pause the game and press L1, →, ↓, ←, ↑, R1
Tokyo Time Trial Available:
Pause game play and press L1, ←, →, R1, ←, →, L1
Subway Time Trial Available:
Pause the game and press L1, ←, L1, R1, →, R1
Debug Menu:
Pause the game and press ↑, →, ←, ↓, ●, L1, R1, R1, L1, ●, ↓, ←, →, ↑
Choose Mission:
Pause the game and press ↑, ↓, ●, L1, R1, L1, ●, ↓, ↑
Next Mission:
Pause the game and press ■, ●, R1, L1, ●, ↓, L1, ↑
Extra Nitros:
Pause the game and press L1, ●, ↓, L1, ↑, ■, ●, R1
All money:
Pause the game and press L1, R1, ↑, ●, ↓, ■, →, R1, L1
Add 1 minute to time:
Pause the game and press ↓, L1, L1, ●, ●, R1, ↑, ■, L1
Invulnerable:
Pause the game and press L1, L1, L1, L1, ←, ●, ●, ■, L1
Infinite fuel:
Pause the game and press L1, ●, ←, L1, ●, R1, L1, ↑, R1, ↓
All time trials available:
Pause the game and press R1, L1, ●, ←, ●, ●, ←, L1, ●
Car tuneup menu:
Pause the game and press L1, R1, L1, ↑, ↓, ●, ↓, →, ←, ■, R1



WCW Nitro

Unlock Single Set of Wrestlers:
At the options screen, press R2, L2, R1, L1, L1, R1, L2, R2, Select. On the Character Selection screen, highlight a wrestler and press L1, R1, L2, R2, L1, R1, L2, R2, Select. All three hidden wrestlers related to the wrestler highlighted are unlocked.

Unlock All Wrestlers:
Press R1 four times, L1 four times, R2 four times and L2 four times. Pick your grappler at the Character Selection screen. A sound confirms correct code entry and all 48 bonus wrestlers are available.

Ring Select:
Press R1, R2, R1, R2, Select at the options screen. A sound confirms correct code entry. Press Select to flick through the rings.

More Rings:
Press L1, L2, R1, R2, L1, L2, R1, R2, Select at the options screen. The Graveyard, Spaceship, Circus, Hive, Turbo, Wunderland, Boudoir, Hall of Mirrors, Rec Room, Psychedelic, Disco, Jungle, 1984, Quark, and Texas rings are now selectable.

Hidden Rants:
On the Character Selection screen, highlight any wrestler and press ● to hear his comments.

YMCA Dance:
Select the Disco ring and press L2. If you do this while your opponent is out of the ring, you can achieve a cheesy ring-out while he waits for you to stop.

Swelling Heads:
Press L1 seven times, L2 then Select at the options screen. A sound confirms you did it correctly. The heads of each wrestler swell when hit.

Big Head Mode:
Press R1 seven times, R2 then Select at the options screen. A sound confirms you did it correctly.

Big Heads, Hands, Feet:
Press R2 seven times, R1 then Select at the options screen. A sound confirms you did it correctly.

Big Hands:
Press L2 seven times, L1 seventeen times at the mode selection screen.

Special Ending:
Complete the game with one of the programmers for a special ending followed by FMV sequences for all the characters.

Interference:
Press Select during a match. Another wrestler appears and interferes with the match.

Tips Clinic

Are your bowels playing up? See a doctor. Suffering from acute lack of health (or lives, or ammo)? Contact EPM's tips clinic...

EPM get loads of letters asking for hints, cheats and general tips, so we thought it was time we opened a Tips Clinic offering specific tips requested by you. Although our hints library is well stocked, a tips request occasionally has us flumoxed. This is where you come in. From this issue, we will solve what problems we can, and throw the few we can't over to you. Can you help with anything on this month's Critical List? Is there a tip you need yourself? Write to The Tips Clinic...

DIAGNOSED AND CURED
The following patients have been healed by the EPM Tips Clinic...

Marc Mason is a big fan of RAYMAN and TOTAL DRIVIN', and wants some cheats. In RAYMAN, try the following:
Levels and abilities: Enter the password FJSJ!C62oP
99 Lives: Use the password XNB9FM!Z2?
Continues: With two or fewer continues remaining, on the Continue screen press ↑, ↓, →, ← slowly. This is notoriously unreliable, so practice.
Picture in Picture: Pause and hold R2, then press ●, ●, ←, ●, ●.
Long Demo: After the Ubi Soft logo, hold all four shoulder buttons. Press and hold Start at the rock wall animation, and release everything when the screen goes black.
Can anyone help with TOTAL DRIVIN'?

James Menghe of Purley, Croydon, wants cheats for RESIDENT EVIL: THE DIRECTOR'S CUT.
To get two of every item collected, on the Skill Select screen highlight Advanced and press → until it turns green. To select lower skill levels in the RE2 demo, highlight New Game and hold →.

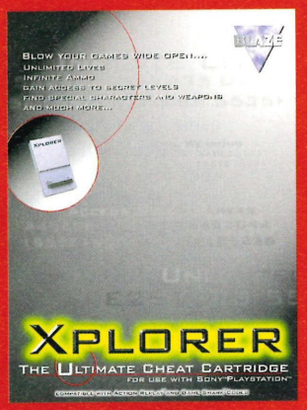
Ronan O'Malley is after COOLBOARDERS 2 cheats. Here they are:
Bonus Boards: Set the record for every track in Freestyle Mode.
Mirror Mode: Complete Snowboarding Combined Mode and, on the options screen, press Select on Controller Two. At the Mode Selection Screen, press +R1.
Select Boss: Come first in Mirror Mode.
Select Alien/Snowman: There are two ways of doing this. Either score over 40.0 on the Half Pipe course or set all records in Freestyle Mode and complete all 100 moves in Master Mode.
Sexy Costumes: To spice up the game, on the main menu, highlight the Big Air option and press ↓, R1, ↑, R1, ↓, R2, ↑, R2, ↑, ↑, R1, ↓, ↓, R2. On the character Selection Screen (except in Competition Mode) you can switch cozzies by holding ✖ and using the D-Pad.

Paul Corrigan, of Doncaster, Yorks, is playing an American version of MORTAL KOMBAT 4. 'What's the Stage Fatality where you knock your opponent onto spikes?', he asks. 'Also, have you any Kombat Kodes?' Try these:

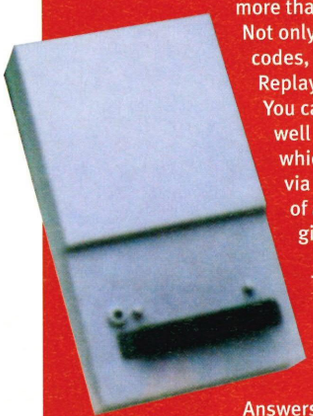
Kombat Kodes:
001 001: Unlimited Run
002 002: Weapon Kombat
010 010: Disable Maximum Damage
012 012: Noob Saibot
020 020: Red Rain
050 050: Explosive Kombat
060 060: No Rain on Thunder Stage
100 100: Throwing Disabled
111 111: Free Weapon
123 123: No Power
222 222: Random Weapons
321 321: Big Head Mode
333 333: Randper Kombat
444 444: Armed And Dangerous
555 555: Many Weapons
666 666: Silent Kombat

Stage Kodes
011 011: Goro's Dungeon
022 022: Scorpion Stage
033 033: Blue Face Stage
044 044: Tomb Stage
055 055: Rain Stage
066 066: Snake Stage
101 101: Temple
202 202: Living Forest
303 303: Prison Stage
313 313: Snow Stage

INTREPID XPLORER COMPO
Ten Blaze Xplorers to be won!



Blaze's own cheat machine scored an impressive 8.5/10 in Issue Seven's Stuff round-up. With the Xplorer, you have cheats for literally hundreds of classic PlayStation games, without the tedium of entering thumb-twisting codes of directions and symbols - assuming the programmers put a cheat in at all. No such worries with the Xplorer - it goes straight to the heart of the code, offering aids such as invulnerability, infinite lives, ammo or health, all available objects or power-ups and more. You can even use more than one cheat for a single game. Not only does the Xplorer use its own codes, it also recognises Action Replay and Game Shark codes too. You can save codes you've input as well as using the built-in ones, which can be constantly updated via separate memory cards. Best of all, we have ten of them to give away...



To win a Blaze Explorer, just answer the following question:
Who was the first explorer to reach the South Pole?
Answers on a postcard to:

I Wanna be an Xplorer Compo
extreme PlayStation Magazine
Quay Magazine Publishing
Jade Manor Court
West Quay Road
Poole
Dorset
BH15 1JF

Entries received after 23rd August will be redirected to an uncharted area of the Amazon Basin.

THE CRITICAL LIST...
The following patients are still suffering. Can you offer treatment? If you can help any of the walking wounded with their tip quips, write to: Dr How, extreme PlayStation magazine, Quay Magazine Publishing, Jade Manor Court, West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 1JF.

- ***Neil Prasad*** has a problem. Not a personal problem, but a problem with TOCA. 'How do you get the Flexmobile cheat to work?', he asks.
- Do you have any game shark codes for FFVII (not like I need them though)? If you don't need them, ***Kyle Rickert***, why ask for them? If anyone has any, though, send 'em in.
- "I know it's crap", says ***Noel Ashcroft*** of Nuneton, "but do you have any cheats for PENNY RACERS?". We don't, but perhaps someone can help?



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Ex-Communication

AIN'T TEKKEN NO MORE

Dear EPM,
When Namco confirm Tekken 4 is in development, the gaming public will slip into a sweaty state of anticipation, and when not slouching in arcade doorways will be writing into magazines demanding previews, workstations and any new shreds of information they can muster on the inevitable PlayStation incarnation. The reasons behind this eludes me. I must admit I'm partial to the odd round on Tekken 3, and I bear no grudge against the genre in question, but ever since the PlayStation's launch, software houses (and Namco in particular) have focused the weight of their efforts into churning out 3D beat-'em-ups, each new game showing minimal improvement over the previous offering.
If Namco HQ was a bakery, and their basic beat-'em-up engine was a bun maker, the Tekken games would be the buns, each new bun boasting cream of a smoother texture and a few more hundreds and thousands sprinkled on top. Whereas if Namco had any aspiration to invent, they'd be working on developing a new cake maker that would eventually produce truly ground-breaking results. Fighting games have been around for ages, and the PSX already houses numerous classic examples (the Tekken trio, among others), so why do we need more? I'd like to think we've moved on from mindless button-bashing games and into a new generation of videogaming. I for one prefer games with the depth and longevity of Final Fantasy VII or the Tomb Raider twosome. There isn't a gamer out there who can honestly say they received the same sense of satisfaction by downing True Ogre on Hard Arcade as they did from successfully negotiating a gauntlet of platforms and pits in Tomb Raider 2 or by defeating the awesome Ruby Weapon in FFVII. However, if Namco are planning on continuing their Tekken series, maybe it's time they considered employing some fresh innovation. Bushido Blade and Namco's own Soul Blade are proof that by striking a slightly dusty concept with a streak of originality, something worthy of true admiration will come. By delving into new territories, such as the RPG and action/adventure areas to name a few, and wielding some of their famed Namco magic just think what they could offer in videogaming excellence for public consumption. This is an opinion, of course, but I firmly believe that in the long term it will be in everyone's favour.
Chris MacDonald, Cornwall

EPM: Many good points here, and a fine confectionery analogy to boot. The reason for there being so many second rate beat-'em-ups is the titanic financial success of the Tekken series. The other software houses saw this potential cash cow and wanted a slice of the pie. However, what actually sold T2 was the serious levels of gameplay and graphical innovation, and in churning out often less technically-accomplished clones, the other publishers are missing the point. Bemoaning Namco for daring to follow up their own game is a touch rough, particularly as it's been nearly two years since the last Tekken instalment.
The real target of your ire should be the copycat developers who try to ape the king of the hill and waste their energies making a weaker facsimile. To accuse fighting games as being 'mindless button-bashing' is also a little cruel, as any decent beat-'em-up requires a great deal of thought, practice and skill to play well.
Holding up RPGs as the way forward is debatable, as there have also been a clutch of frankly twee FFVII coat-tail riders. You must also remember Namco is a primarily arcade-bred software house whose output is largely based around coin-op conversions, which naturally are not designed for home play from the ground up. The old adage 'stick to what you're good at' has paid dividends both for them and us. Remember, specialisation is not a crime, but laziness is. Congratulations on receiving our coveted Star Letter award, but unfortunately we've lost your address - can you write again, offering your full postal address and choice of game?

MISSING INACTION

Dear EPM,
Firstly, as we've all heard you're the best mag, you do the best reviews, keep it up, etc. But on to the point; when are Aironauts (featured in Issue 2) and Vigilante 8 going to be reviewed and released?

EPM: By now you'll have read the Vigilante 8 review in Issue 6; and it's hit the shelves in no uncertain terms. Aironauts is another matter altogether, alas. When we put it on the cover we were promised it was not far from completion. Now, though, we're glad to say it should arrive for preview (at least) next month, so you can see if it was worth the epoch-rivalling wait.

Also, in Ex-Communication last month (Issue 5) you said Grand Theft Auto 'is a brilliant idea let down by shoddy graphics and game design'. Brilliant idea yes, shoddy graphics, okay, but shoddy game design? It had me and my mates hooked for weeks, and we're no mugs, honest!
Freddie Exall, Lancashire

EPM: What we were referring to was stuff like the way in which cars can materialise out of thin air right next to you, how you can be chased by the police into a paint shop, who then sheepishly get back in their cars and wait patiently outside while you get a re-spray, and then fail to recognise you as you drive out again, thus becoming easy meat for some 'free' points-scoring. In addition d'you recall the way there's only a few degrees of resolution when the character fires his gun, so there are numerous 'dead spots' it's impossible to hit without moving, and the dodgy AI which means it's possible to break into a vehicle and drive it off right in front of the cop's faces without them pursuing? I'm surprised you didn't pick up on these points which are just niggles at first, but act together cumulatively to take the edge off the gameplay and discourage further progression.

ANSWER ME THIS

Dear EPM,
In your magazine you state the winners of competitions, so why don't you state the answers? OK, the first Extreme PlayStation I bought was Issue 4 and you had answers in it, so why not in Issues 5 or 6? What I want to know is what was the answer to the Good Old Murray competition ? Or the meaning of life?

EPM: The reason we haven't been publishing the answers to our competitions is they're usually obvious, offering a laugh rather than a Mastermind-style challenge. The answer to the Murray Walker question was, unsurprisingly, E: All of the Above. The purpose/meaning of life is to experience all points of the universe's consciousness both subjectively and simultaneously.

Is there any point in getting the Dual Shock joypad? Christian seems to think so, but as far as I can see you can only use it on Gran Turismo and I don't think I should spend £22 if I can only use it for one game.
Conor Lamb, Co. Antrim

EPM: I think you may have misunderstood a touch, Conor. The Dual Shock rumbles with virtually every new game released since it went on sale, including titles such as Kula World, Dead or Alive, Colin McRae Rally and so on. Rest assured software developers will be very keen to include the jiggly joypad option whenever possible.

SHOTS IN THE DARK

Dear EPM,
Congrats on an absolutely kick-ass mag that rules the roost. Thanks for your opinions on Micro Machines V3, which I bought on your recommendation that was completely justified. Ta.

EPM: Word.

Do you gurus have any news on FFVIII? If so how about some shots?. Talking about screenshots, how do you take them without getting the TV's frame in the picture?
Steven Christie, Fife

EPM: You'll have read our FFVIII news item last ish. To gets the shots of games we run the PSX through an Apple Macintosh computer that's equipped with a special grabbing board. This

GAMEplay

Thanks to those awfully nice people at Gameplay, this month and every month, the writer of the Star Letter wins a game of his or her choice. This month's worthy winner is Chris MacDonald of Cornwall. Remember, folks, when writing to EPM, state your choice of game just in case you win the Star Letter prize. You know it makes sense...

lets us snatch a screen at the push of the Return key, which then stores it as an ordinary graphics file. Simple, eh?

POSTER POSER

Dear EPM,
The first game I ever bought was Final Fantasy VII. It's the most fantastic game ever made in the entire history of the universe. Would it be possible for you to send me some large posters of my favourite characters?
Jason Thomas, Swansea, West Glamorgan.

EPM: What makes you think we've got any?

WHO ARE THE BBFC?

Dear EPM,
First off (like everybody else) I would like to congratulate you on a great mag. Secondly I would like to know what exactly what the BBFC is, because a lot of the letters written to you have something concerning the BBFC.
I am also wondering if you have some info on Final Fantasy VIII, because I want to know if it's worth saving up for like the last one (FFVII)? If the creators of Final Fantasy VII are reading this, I want to know why they don't make a sequel in the Final Fantasy series with the same characters as in the game before, or at least one of them (not including Cid who has been in all of them. At least for all I know).
Kyle Rickert, by e-mail.

EPM: The BBFC is the British Board of Film Classification. They're the body who put the age rating on videos, films and video games before release. Their ratings are legally binding, and anyone selling or renting a film or game to someone younger than the relevant age rating can be prosecuted. This is different from the European Leisure Software Publishers' Association (ELSPA) rating, which is voluntary and not legally binding.
Regarding Final Fantasy VIII, too many lesser mags are printing rumours as fact, searching the Internet for crumbs of news without taking the trouble to check them before printing. Rest assured we'll bring you all the latest news as soon as it's made, and we'll make sure it's accurate too.
Regarding your other FFVII point, it would be nice to see a few fave characters resurfacing in the new game, but without fresh blood the series would get stagnant. Let's cross our fingers and hope for a mixture of old and new...

A LICENCE TO PRINT MONEY?

Dear EPM,
I have only one complaint about Sony's little grey box - movie licences. on one hand we get games like Tekken 3, Tomb Raider, WipEout 2097 and Forsaken, and on the other we get movie-licensed games. I'm not trying to slam them, but the only reason they seem to survive is on the back of the film (eg. Men in Black) or an animated series (Reboot).
The same goes for sports games. World Cup 98 wasn't a massive step up from FIFA: Road to the World Cup (and I agree with Saul - Gazza shouldn't have been dropped). Apart from the official tournament, logos and chicken there isn't much difference between them. Same goes for American sports like NHL '98, NFL '98 and NBA Live '98.
Ben Jones, New Quay, Dyfed.

EPM: Yes, there are some really bad film licences which only sell on the backs of the films (Men in Black, reviewed this ish, being a prime example), but Reboot (80%, Ish Four), although based on a kid's cartoon, was deemed unsuitable for the under-15s. Likewise, Lucky Luke (84%, Ish Four), is based on a cartoon that's seldom seen outside France - if it sells in respectable numbers, it won't be because of its licence. Don't forget the legion of cool film licences too - Alien Trilogy, Die Hard Trilogy and Dark Forces to name but three. Fair point about the sports sims, though there's always room for updates that offer genuine improvements over the original.
Finally, it's a little ironic that you complain about poor-quality movie licences and then ask for Men in Black should you get the star letter. You're requesting a game you haven't even seen reviewed (it's in this ish), presumably because of its licence.

MEMORY MAN...

Dear EPM,
Why does Premier Manager 98 take 15 blocks of memory? Why was the game not packaged with a memory card?
Raler TTK, Newcastle.

EPM: Because it has to store a huge amount of game data. The stats for every player on every team must be retained, as well as the results and team rosters. Packaging the game with a card would push the price up and make it unattractive to those who have a spare already.

Got a moan? Don't leave well alone! Send your merry missives, INCLUDING YOUR GAME OF CHOICE in case you get the coveted Star Letter, to:

EX-COMMUNICATION
EXTREME PLAYSTATION
QUAY MAGAZINE PUBLISHING
JADEMANOR COURT
WEST QUAY ROAD
POOLE
DORSET BH15 1JF

e-mail...
epm@quaynet.co.uk



STUFF

MORE CONTROLLERS, GUNS, MEMORY CARDS AND LEADS. YOU MIGHT COMPLAIN ABOUT LACK OF ORIGINALITY AMONG PERIPHERAL MANUFACTURERS, BUT CHECK OUT THIS MONTH'S STUFF COLUMN AND REFLECT THAT 'ORIGINAL' AND 'GOOD' ARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT THINGS...

THE GLOVE

Reality Quest - £49.99

With this device you can play a game with only one hand. It functions as both a digital and analogue controller, the player controlling direction my moving his wrist. The symbol and shoulder buttons are under the player's fingers. It works with all games.

VERDICT - The Glove works better than we expected, but it's not easy to get to grips with. Even the manufacturers say it takes time to get used to. But why bother? What's the point of spending £50 on a piece of kit that demands practice before you can use it properly and gives no better results than an analogue pad when mastered? Only recommended if you've lost an arm.



2/10

REAL ARCADE LIGHT GUN

Joytech Europe - £44.99



This works with standard and GunCon games and features programmable auto-fire and auto-reload functions. There's also a foot pedal included. You can set this to take over any function within the game, but it really comes into its own when playing Time Crisis - use the pedal to duck, just like in the arcades.
The Real Arcade Light Gun features force feedback via a unit which plugs directly into the mains. This gives an authentic recoil feel, increasing realism. The Multi-Out Adapter, needed if you have a newer-style PlayStation, is not supplied.

VERDICT - You can't really argue with the quality of this gun; it's dynamic, accurate and feature-filled. However, quality like this doesn't come cheap. Can you justify spending the best part of £45 on a light gun when there are only a handful of light gun games worth having? Still, if you're a fan of the genre and are looking for a real arcade experience, this is for you.

8/10

CONTROLLER PLUS FOOTBALL SPECIAL EDITION

Joytech Europe - £9.99

A football edition of Joytech's famous Controller Plus. Features Turbo and Slow functions; Slow constantly pauses and unpauses the game, while Turbo, which can be assigned to any button, allows you to hold said button down and enjoy the effects of tapping it rapidly. Great for fast-firing blasters.



VERDICT - A joypad every bit as comfortable as Sony's own, with two extra functions and a sub-£10 price tag? A barg.

9/10

ENGLAND MEMORY CARD

Joytech Europe - £9.99

It's a 1-meg (15-slot) memory card. For the PlayStation. With the England flag on it.



VERDICT - You can't really argue with a 1Mb card for under a tenner. Cheaper than Sony's, and using the England flag rather than the footie team's logo means you're paying for the product, not an endorsement.

8.5/10

ANALOGUE CONTROLLER PLUS

Joytech Europe - £24.99

Same price as Sony's, but also includes a Turbo function. The D-Pad is lighter, but apart from that, it's essentially the same.



VERDICT - We fight over this one in the office. 'Nuff said.

8.5/10

RGB/SUPER AV CABLE

Joytech Europe - £9.99

No point rating this one - you either need it or you don't. It's basically an enhanced SCART cable which not only connects your PSX to a SCART television, but also replaces the phono plugs removed on later PlayStations to allow Sony to make them cheaper. Now you can use a GunCon-compatible light gun or connect your PSX to your stereo. It's a really excellent piece of kit, invaluable to light gun fans with SCART TVs.



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ON THE RECORD





It's been rumoured for quite a while now, and believed to have been dropped when singer Rhona Mitra parted company with Core Design and ceased to be the human face of Lara Croft, but at long last Lara's album Come Alive has been released. Featuring the said Ms Mitra on the vox and produced by Dave Stewart of Eurythmics fame, Come Alive is a lightweight rock/dance hybrid which won't push back either genre but manages to be quite listenable at the same time. It's a little lazily put together, featuring three different versions of the single Getting Naked and two of Beautiful Day; there's no excuse for this. Even so, its poppy rhythms make it an ideal birthday present for your kid brother. Come Alive won't change anyone's life, but its easy going accessibility make it worth a listen. Come Alive is published by Discovery Records, catalogue number 4948720.

Likewise, Lara's (or should we say Rhona's) single, Getting Naked, has yet to trouble the charts but we've got ten of them to give away. To stand a chance of winning one, answer this simple question:

With Rhona Mitra gone, who's the new face of Lara Croft?

Answers on a postcard, though on the back of fivers is acceptable, to the compo address.

GIGA FIGHTERS



Tiger Electronics, makers of the world-famous Giga Pets Tamagotchi-type toy, are back with the Giga Fighter. Needless to say it draws its inspiration from Bandai's DigiMon, but the Giga Fighter is a very different beast.

Unlike virtual pets, you don't actually hatch a creature and nurture it from birth to death. Instead you recruit and train up to four fighters at a time, chosen (literally) from a range of six. Individual units are licensed from films and games - currently available are Mortal Kombat and Batman & Robin, featuring characters like Jax, Sub Zero, Batgirl and Mr Freeze. In the pipeline are WCW, Xena the Warrior Princess and others.When you've chosen your stable you train and keep them, picking fights by connecting your unit to a friend's with the link-up cable provided. You can link units with differing licences, pitting, say, Batman against Hulk Hogan.

Giga Fighters cost £15.99, but we have ten to give away. Just answer this simple question:

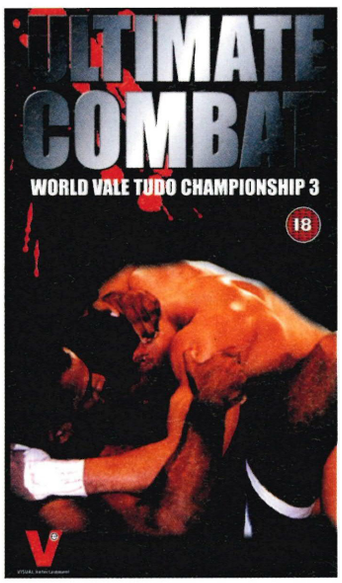
Who would you like to see paired off in a Giga Fighters brawl and why?

Answers on a postcard to By Fist and Foot Competition at the competition address.

MUSIC

DELAKOTA release their debut album One Love on 14th September through the Go Beat! record label. Featuring the singles The Rock, C'mon Cincinatti and their low-key 12" Brothers, the album covers a variety of musical styles, leading one commentator to describe the band as 'truly schizophrenic'. THE DIVINE COMEDY release their new album, Fin de Siecle, at the end of August. The album is described as 'a comment on the Twentieth Century as it approaches its climax'. It's a thought-provoking, powerful album which allows Neil Hannon to explore the darker side of his witty lyricisms. GOMEZ release their new single Whippin' Piccadilly (Turbo Version) through Hut Recordings on 24th August. Describing the band's 24-hour adventure following a gig in Manchester. Its humour is laced with an infectious groove and has been a highlight of their acclaimed live shows for some time. Also with a new single, and a forthcoming UK tour, are EMBRACE. The single, My Weakness is None of Your Business is taken from their Number One debut album The Good Will Out, and is released on 17th August. Watch out too for the new PLACEBO single, Pure Morning, released on Hut recordings. LODGER release their debut album on the Island Studios label. A Walk In The Dark on 7th September. This contains the hit singles I'm Leaving, Always Round Here and their forthcoming single, Small Change.

WANT A FIGHT MATE



Fans of genuine video violence should check out Ultimate Combat: World Vale Tudo Championship 3. Publishers have a whole series of these fight vids, no-holds-barred brawls with virtually no rules. This, the third in the World Vale Tudo Championship series, features eight WVC superstars battling it out to be the next Super Fight Champion.

The rules, such as they are, are simple. No eye gouging, no biting and no hanging on the ring enclosure. Fights end by knockout, submission, throwing in the towel or intervention by a doctor or the referee.

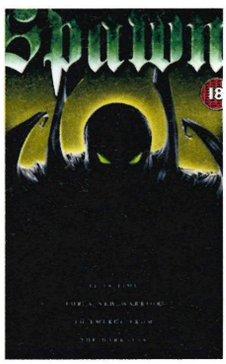
Interestingly, the Combat series of titles were originally to be called Brutal Combat, but this was changed at the insistence of the BBFC, who still gave it an (understandable) 18 rating.

Ultimate Combat: World Vale Tudo Championship 3 costs £12.99 and runs for 103 minutes.

SPAWN



Medusa Pictures are proud to release two more videos in the Tom McFarlane's Spawn series. Spawn is one of the comic book industry's most imaginative and successful anti-heroes, though his live action film and PSX game left a lot to be desired. Spawn tells the horrible tale of former CIA operative Al Simmons. Betrayed and brutally murdered, Simmons makes a pact with the demon Maleboolgia to return to the land of the living and harvest souls for hell, only to be near his wife Wands. Alas, she's married his best friend Terry Fitzgerald. Simmons is now a cloaked monster with no soul.



The first video features episodes 7 & 8. Home Bitter Home has Al dreaming that his killer was former mercenary and ex-partner Chapel. Corrupt CIA chief Jason Wynn orders him to find a cache of stolen weaponry before it's traced to Wynn, but Chapel finds Spawn instead. In Access Denied, Terry Fitzgerald, the new husband of Spawn's widow, is on the run after being framed by Wynn. Spawn reluctantly comes to his aid as an assassination team closes in. The second video offers episodes 9 & 10. In Colours of Blood, a pack of drug dealers terrorise the homeless in Rat City, leading to pleas that Spawn help get rid of them. He succeeds, but Jason Wynn is still on the trail of Terry Fitzgerald. Finally, Send in the KKKlowns a serial killer is on the loose. In this episode, Wanda gets to see Spawn for the first time - she's horrified.

Each video costs £12.99 each, but we have five sets to give away. To win Spawn Episodes 7 & 8 and 9 & 10, answer this simple question:

What does CIA stand for?

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ISSUE NINE



FIFTH ELEMENT

We get to look at Sony's top tie-in. Is it the new Doom/Tomb Raider standard, or just another Men In Black-style pretender to the throne? We take a good hard look at the game, and not just at the gorgeous Leeloo...

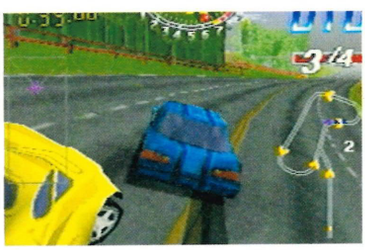


MORTAL KOMBAT 4

Other mags have reviewed import versions of the game and claimed they were UK PAL. We want no part of it - check out our import review this very ish, but the UK version isn't yet ready. Stay tuned next month for our exclusive UK review...

SAN FRANCISCO RUSH

This ace racer puts a whole new perspective on driving games. There are so many secret paths and areas it almost plays like an adventure. But is it any good? Check out our review next ish...



ASSAULT

Telstar's top blaster comes home. This is the true successor to games like Gryzor and Contra, not the half-hearted Contra 3D or the terrifyingly bad Lone Soldier. Mindless blasting? Sure it is, but who cares? It looks set to be great fun.



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